MARVEL
Age
136
MAY 1994
$1.25 US $1.70 CAN
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
Sample Fleer Spider-Man cards
Neil Gaiman & Alice Cooper
MARRINAN
New Warriors™

STAN LEE PRESENTS:

MARVEL Age

Tom DeFalco
Editor in Chief
Mark Gruenwald
Senior Executive Editor
Carl Potts
Executive Editor, Marvel/Epic
Bob Budiansky
Executive Editor, Special Projects
Steve Saffel
Editor

Jim Hoston
Joe Caponsacco
Designers

Al Bensew
Peter Cooper
Additional Design

Chris Marrinan
Joe Caponsacco
Cover Artists/New Warriors
Angel Medina
Bill Anderson
Jim Hoston
Cover Artists/Blackwulf

Marc McLaurin
Marvel Age Colorist

Terry Hernon
Jerry Novick
Bill Rosemann
Tom Russo
Jeff Simons
Beat Reporters

Craig Anderson
Joe Andreani
Richard Ashford
Mark Bernardo
Tom Brevoort
Karl Bollers
Lymaire Brust
Joey Cavalieri
Bobbie Chase
Chris Cooper
Kelly Corvese
Dan Daley
Tom Daning
Eric Fein
James Felder
Danny Fingeroth
Shelly Fisch
Paula Foye
Jaye Gardner
Suzanne Gaffney
Glenn Greenberg
Bob Harras
Glenn Herdling
Matt Idelson
Marie Javins
Michael Kraiger
Consulting Editors

Mike Lackey
Spencer Lamm
John Lewandowski
Carlos Lopez
Scott Marshall
Mike Marts
Marc McLaurin
Freddy Mendez
Hildy Mesnik
Matthew Morra
Sarra Mossoff
Mindy Newell
Fabian Nicieza
Mariano Nicieza
Lisa Patrick
Lia Pelosi
Mark Powers
Ben Raab
Michael Rockwitz
Evan Skolnick
Kevin Somers
Mort Todd
Rob Tokar
Tim Tuohy
Michael Warlow
Nel Yomtov

John Romita
Art Director
Steve Geiger
Managing Art Director

Scott Eimer (Pond Scum)
Yancey C. Labat
Delayne Hawkins
The Raiders

Joe Kaufman
Book Designer

Cindy Emmert
Designer

Virginia Romita
Traffic/Production Manager
Dawn Geiger
Assistant Production Manager/Designer
Dan Carr
Maria Parwulski
Typesetters

Jack Abel
Claire Putsché
Flo Steinberg
Proofreaders

George Roussos
Bullpen Cover Colorist
Paul Becton
Color Corrections

Steve Alexandrov
Ericka T. Moran
Johnny Greene
Kevin Tinsley
Cover Coordinators

Rob Carosella
Jesus Gonzalez
Camera Technicians

Jon Babcock
Susan Crespi
Letterers

Loretta Krol
Matt Maley
Wayne Murray

John Bligh
Steve Bunche
Peter Cooper
Holly Joyner
Mechanical Artists

Jerry Kalinowski
Sylvia Masa
Jennifer O'Donnell
Thomas Velazquez
Caroline B. Wells

Millie Shuriff
Accounting

Judy Sottile
Jeff Zanenshine
Computer Mavens

Christopher Ebel
Debra Brust
Manufacturing Warriors

Dahlia Aponte
Christine Aurillia
Bernadette Ayala-Thomas

Stephanie Hallberg
Suzy Lee
Sylvia Masa

EDITORIAL

This issue marks two departures.

First, we're departing from the "how it's done" features readers have come to expect from **MARVEL AGE**, instead making room for a special paparazzo photo piece on the 1994 Marvel Holiday Bash. Take a look, and let us know what you think. Do you want to see *more* of these personality-driven features, or do you feel the space is better spent with some other sort of material?

If you want, hold your answers for next month, when you'll have a chance to express you opinion *and win prizes!*

Also, we're sad to note the departure of Rick Parker from his regular *Bossmen* strip that made its debut in these pages lo! those many months ago. Rick has enjoyed taking every opportunity to add to the *legends* that are Tom DeFalco and Mark Gruenwald, but the task of producing the monthly **BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD** comic book has finally taken its toll. (Being a new father may have had some small effect, too.)

So if you want to find that bizarre, Wolvertonesque style that is so purely Rick's, you're going to have to go over to B & B. But never fear, Rick knows that there's always a spot waiting for him here in **MARVEL AGE**, and if we're lucky, sometime between now and the millennium Ricko'll turn in the finished proposal for his full-length **BOSSMEN** comic book.

After all, no effort is too great for our beloved Tom and Mark.

—Steve Saffel

contents

UP FRONT 1 2 3 4
MARVEL MUSIC 5 6 7 8
BLACKWULF 9 10 11 12 13 14
HEMBECK 15 16 17 18
MARVEL HOLIDAY BASH 19 20 21 22 23 24 25
LETTERS 26 27 28 29 30 31
CHECKLIST 32
ALICE COOPER
NEW WARRIORS
BLADE
CUSTOM COMICS
STAN'S SOAPBOX
THE BOSSMEN

Dan Buckley
Sylvia Cruz
Paul Curtis
Doby Daenger
Melisa Danon
Patricio Dazzo
Hirut Dejoye
Feliso Garrido
Alison Gill
Linda Gilmore
Friendly Assistance

Mary "Mac" McPherran
Tom Ralston
Pam Rutt
Virginia Saraya
Stu Schwartzberg
Phil Sheehy
Marti Silber
Sam Springle
John Taddeo
Nerissa Tiglao

Mike Martin
West Coast Field Representative
Ellen Jones
Southeast Field Representative
Mark Santeramo
Eastern Field Representative

Christine Slusarz
Missed

Jackie Aguila
Karen Corbo
Carol Platt
Rights and Permissions
Matt Ragone
Vice-President/Direct Sales
Skip Dietz
Direct Sales Manager/Co-op Publications
Craig Kunaschk
Direct Sales Manager/Distributor Liaison
Kevin Tang
Overworked Catalog Editor
Terry Hernon
Assistant Manager/Copywriter
Seth Deitchman
Assistant Co-Op Manager
Georgiana White
Customer Service
L. Dean Rohlfing
Retail Services Manager
Pennie Saadallah
Asst. Field Rep. Coordinator
Chris Folmar
Southwest Field Rep.
Andrea Goldberg
Mid-West Field Representative

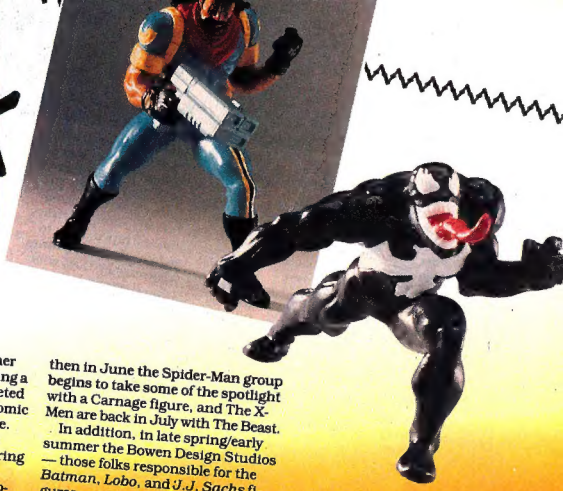
Jim Sokolowski
Vice-President/Specialty Sales
Bob Kerekes
Manager of Business Development
Laurie Stecky
Assistant Marketing Manager Newsstand Sales
Scott Donigian
Distribution Representative On the Northern Road
Craig McWilliams
Distribution Representative On the Southern Road

Sven Larsen
Marketing Director
Jim Brennan
Advertising and Promotions Director
Vito Incovaia
Associate Creative Director
Gary Guzzo
Publicity Director
Tammy Brown
Advertising Manager
Scott Williams
Senior Advertising Art Director
Heide Pinnock
Advertising Art Director

Matt Friedman
Jim Kreuger
Amy Meyer
Copywriters
Ralph Macchio
Senior Deviant

MARVEL AGE® Vol. 1, No. 136, May, 1994. (ISSN #8750-4367) Published by MARVEL COMICS, Terry Stewart, President; Stan Lee, Publisher; Michael Hobson, Group Vice President, Publishing. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016. **SECOND CLASS POSTAGE PAID AT NEW YORK, N.Y. AND AT ADDITIONAL MAILING OFFICES.** Published monthly. Copyright © 1994 by Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. All rights reserved. Price $1.25 per copy in the U.S. and $1.70 in Canada. Subscription rate for 12 issues: $12.00 U.S., $24.00 foreign and Canadian subscribers must add $10.00 for postage and GST. GST #R127032852. This periodical may not be sold except by authorized dealers and is sold subject to the condition that it shall not be sold or distributed with any part of its cover or markings removed, nor in a mutilated condition. MARVEL AGE (including all MARVEL titles and prominent MARVEL characters featured in this issue and the distinctive likenesses thereof) is a trademark of MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP, INC. **POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO MARVEL AGE, c/o MARVEL DIRECT MARKETING INC./SUBSCRIPTION DEPT., P.O. BOX 1979, DANBURY, CT 06813-1979. TELEPHONE # (203) 743-5331.** Printed in USA.

Up Front



ALL THAT GLITTERS

This spring Marvel's Consumer Products division will be unveiling a number of special projects targeted to X-Men fans who shop in the comic book specialty stores nationwide.

Marvel is teaming with Comic Images of Saddlebrook, NJ, to bring back the popular PVC program. Forty-eight figures have been produced to date, and beginning in April, the next three — Wolverine, Cyclops and Magneto — will be released on a monthly basis, each more than three inches tall.

Production will shift to one figure per month in May with the release of a custom-designed Bishop PVC, then in June the Spider-Man group begins to take some of the spotlight with a Carnage figure, and The X-Men are back in July with The Beast.

In addition, in late spring/early summer the Bowen Design Studios — those folks responsible for the *Batman*, *Lobo*, and *J.J. Sachs* figures — are working with Marvel to produce a limited edition porcelain Gambit figurine. This will be a cold-cast statuette, which, according to Bonnie Berryman of Marvel's Consumer Products department, means that "rubber molds are used — which gives you an opportunity to have a lot more detail in the sculpture." The figure will be hand-painted based on artwork provided by Marvel.

REMEMBERING THE KING

Jack Kirby passed away Sunday morning, February 6.

One of the most influential artists in comics history, he was born Jacob Kurtzberg in New York in 1917. Kirby began with newspaper strips and working for the legendary Max Fleischer animation studio. His first work for Marvel (then known as Timely) appeared in "pulp" magazines published in the 1930s.

During the "Golden Age" of the 1940s, Joe Simon and Jack Kirby developed Captain America for Timely Comics and Newsboy Legion and *Boy Commandos* for DC. In the 1950s they created *Boys' Ranch*, *Fighting American*, and the earliest romance comics.

At Marvel in the late '50s he collaborated with Stan Lee on monster, western, and romance titles. In the '60s they launched the "Marvel Age of Comics" with characters like The Fantastic Four, Thor, The Avengers, The Incredible Hulk, and The X-Men.

Kirby developed a broad spectrum of concepts for companies including DC (*New Gods*), Pacific (*Captain Victory*), and Topps Comics. He returned to animation to work on series including *The Fantastic Four* and *Thundarr the Barbarian* in the 1970s.

Upon hearing of Kirby's death, Lee wrote, "A giant has left us." A more extensive remembrance is scheduled for MARVEL AGE #138, in May.

ISLE OF DEATH

This May, movie-goers will be transported to *The Prison Colony* courtesy of Pacific Western Productions and producer Gail Anne Hurd (of *Terminator* fame).

The Prison Colony tells the brutal story of Special Forces Captain John Robbins (played by Ray Liotta, last seen in *Unlawful Entry*), a court-martialed Marine who has been sentenced to live out his days on an island in the middle of nowhere. Far from being a Tropic Paradise, however, this island is instead home to the worst criminals society has to offer. And Robbins is just the sort of person who every criminal would love to skin alive.

The movie distinguishes itself by breaking ranks with the endless stream of techno-action thrillers that recently have hit theaters. Unlike these big guns/lasers-infested movies, *The Prison Colony* portrays a stark existence stripped down to its animal essence. The inhabitants of this island live only by their wits and the weapons they can cull from the island's vast jungle.

The month before the movie's release, Marvel Comics joins with Pacific Western to present the three-part comic book adaptation of the film. **THE PRISON COLONY** comic book will be written by Roger Salick (*The Badger*) with art by Mike Harris (**COPS: THE JOB**) and Chris Ivy. The three were hand-picked for this particular mission, since they have worked on various **PUNISHER** projects in the past.

SPIDERS IN THE HALL

A special six-part Spider-Man limited series, untitled as of press time, will tie-in with the Web-Slinger's continuity and with one of the most prestigious museums in the world — The Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC.

Beginning in June, the Smithsonian will unveil an exhibit titled *Spiders!* Sponsored in part by the Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc., it will cover all facets of the spider's world, and is designed to be both fun and educational. Spider-Man himself will be part of this popular presentation.

Marvel's involvement, however, is not limited to corporate sponsorship, and the six-part comic book limited series will feature Washington, DC, locations, including the exhibit itself. It begins in June, and will be set during current Spider-Man continuity.

The series will be written by Mike Lackey (**BEAVIS & BUTT-HEAD, PUNISHER HOLIDAY SPECIAL**), penciled by Andrew Wildman (**X-MEN ADVENTURES**) and inked by Stephen Baskerville (**WEB OF SPIDER-MAN**). It will feature guest-appearances by The Black Cat and Black Fox, and will spotlight the secret cabal known as The Jury (prominently featured in recent issues of **AMAZING SPIDER-MAN**).

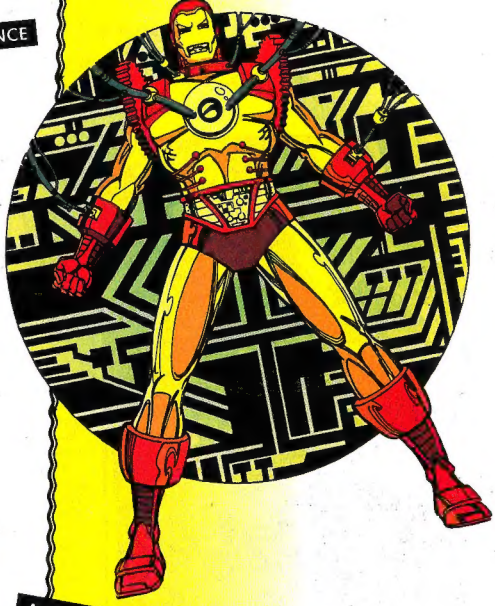
BACK WITH A VENGEANCE

GHOST RIDER #50 marks the Spirit of Vengeance's explosive return to the title that bears his name, as a pivotal transformation causes the character to reappear with an even harder edge than before.

Since his apparent demise, the Ghost Rider's vengeful duties have been taken over by the character known as Vengeance, but even Vengeance isn't safe. In the 50th issue, the villain Anton Hellgate kidnaps Vengeance, forcing the returning Ghost Rider to contact John Blaze and seek help in mounting a rescue. Blaze, however, will never forgive himself — or the Ghost Rider — for what happens next, as Blaze's family is drawn into the fray, with disastrous results.

In the aftermath, Vengeance is slated to receive his own limited series beginning in May, and Blaze returns in an ongoing series slated to begin in June.

GHOST RIDER will be written by series creator Howard Mackie and illustrated by Ron Garney.



A STARK FUTURE

The most powerful armor in the world is in the hands of a mercenary.

In the year 2020, the Stark family line is led by Arnold Stark, who has inherited the armor technology originated by his ancestor, Anthony Stark. But Arnold uses the power for his own profit, and his latest mission draws him into a dramatic kidnapping case. In the course of the events, Arnold Stark will face grim realities that he never expected, and will discover that the course of his life is being guided by the most unexpected puppet master of all.

IRON MAN 2020, a 64-page bookshelf graphic novel, will be written by Walter Simonson (**THOR**, **FANTASTIC FOUR**) and illustrated by Bob Wiacek (**IRON MAN**, **UNCANNY X-MEN**) and William Rosado.

It will be available in May.

COMICS PLUS

Comic book buyers will find three special treatments on key titles in April:

- **CONAN THE ADVENTURER #1:** Conan returns in this series debut with a multi-layered embossed cover that includes a blazing red metallic foil sun rising on a new era for the barbarian.
- **AVENGERS #375:** this epilog to the Avengers 30th anniversary features a special card stock cover and a metallic ink fold-out poster by Steve Epting and Tom Palmer.
- **THOR #375:** The Thunder God's dramatic turning point storyline (see "Of Gods and Earth") is marked by an embossed, painted, foil-treated cover.

– *Jerry A. Novick*

The Last Temptation of Alice

Illustrations by Michael Zulli. TM & © 1994 Nightmare Inc., Neil Gaiman, and Michael Zulli

It seems only natural that the House of Wax is next to the graveyard.

It's cold and dark, and a low mist smudges the light of the gas lamps that flicker unreliably. You walk though the graveyard, thick clay sticking to your boots, weighing you down.

The House of Wax is a huge tent, made of thin brown leather which hangs lifelessly in the windless mist. You walk through the entrance, muddy boots rustling through dead leaves.

The mist curls and writhes in the corner of the tent. You step back, nervously.

"You've come to see the sideshow," says a voice from behind you.

"I have?"

"Of course you have."

You turn and look at the man. His clothes were once elegant, but are now shiny and frayed at the edges. His hair is long and black, his face thin, his eyes set deep in his head. He raises his top hat to you, and grins like a wolf. He gestures with his stick. A hundred candles burst into flame, illuminating a bad place.

Wax statues stand in the tent, each on its own raised pedestal. The showman walks you over to a statue. He runs a finger down its spangled side.

The figure is clasping a microphone. It's a rock and roll star, black make-up outlining its eyes and mouth. The sign next to it reads ALICE COOPER. At its feet sits a copy of MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS #50.

"He looks like you," you tell the showman.

"There's a certain resemblance," he admits.

You walk past a wax statue of an artist with moustachios and beard that Dali might have envied, painting at an easel. The word ZULLI is painted, carefully, on his back.

Near him is a wax statue of a man wearing a leather jacket and dark glasses. He has dark hair, and black jeans. He is holding a placard with the word WRITER on it.

"Do you want to hear what he has to say?" asks the showman. You shrug. There's a rustling at the edge of the tent; you dart a glance, but see nothing other than wax statues, frozen in awkward poses.

The Showman takes a tarnished silver coin from his pocket, and forces it between the lips of the statue. "That's the motto of the lot," he tells you, his voice little more than a whisper. "Put a penny in the slot."

The statue of the writer moves, mechanically. A hand raises, in slow, jerking movements. A head tilts. The lips part, revealing no sign of the coin the showman placed between them.

It begins to talk to us.

I was sitting in my study in England two years ago, when the phone rang. I answered it. I like answering the phone.

"This is Bob Pfeifer. That's P-f-e-i-one-f-e-r. I'm from Epic Records in Los Angeles," he said.

"Hello," I said. I couldn't think why someone from a record company would be calling me. It was, I supposed, vaguely conceivable that someone had taped me singing in the shower; that a bootleg — The Gaiman Shower Tapes — had been released without my knowledge; it was even conceivable such tapes had made it across the Atlantic all the way to LA. But, then, on reflection, it was slightly more likely that I'd been elected Prime Minister of Lichtenstein and no one had told me.

"Yeah. Anyway. One of my artists is a big fan of yours. Well, we're all big fans of yours. Sandman, all that. My assistant, Jason, he's a huge fan of yours."

"That's nice."

"Yeah. So, like I say. This artist I was talking about. He's going to make a concept album."

My head swam with snakes and swords, top hats and black-rimmed eyes.

"And?"

"Well, we were wondering if you could work with the artist on the concept. Are you interested?"

"Who are we talking about here?"

"Well, that's kind of confidential. But it's Alice Cooper."

Alice Cooper?

I *liked* Alice Cooper. I liked *School's Out* and *Billion Dollar Babies* and *Teenage Lament '74*. I thought *Welcome to My Nightmare* was one of the great rock and roll records. I thought *Trash* was a remarkable comeback album.

My head swam with snakes and swords, top hats and black-rimmed eyes.

"Maybe," I said. "I'd like to meet him first."

Wayne's World had been out a week when I met Alice Cooper.

I sat in the hotel restaurant with Bob Pfeifer, who's younger and funnier and lankier than he sounds on the phone, and is always magnificently stressed-out. We're in Phoenix, Arizona.

"There he is," said Bob, pointing out of the restaurant window at a tall man climbing out of a sports car. White tee shirt, jeans, long black hair.

Heads turned as he came into the restaurant. Alice Cooper in person is tall, shaggy, suntanned. His eyes are sharp and good-humoured and alive. He knows more about bad Italian horror movies than anyone who doesn't write books about them for a living.

We ate sandwiches, then went up to my hotel room to talk. On the way out of the restaurant a couple saw Alice and went down on their knees.

"We're not worthy," they wailed. He took it pleasantly. When I asked him about it, he explained that it was from a new movie called *Wayne's World*.

(Every time I've seen Alice in public since then, someone has come over to him, bowed low, said "We're not worthy." Every time he has treated them with good humour, nodded, smiled, and bowed.)

In the hotel room we talked about horror fiction, about stories, about what we'd like to do with the story of the album. We talked about the *Grand Guignol*, the French theatre of blood and horror, popular in the early years of this century. We talked about bad Italian horror movies. We talked about the story of Faust.

Alice Cooper sometimes talked about Alice Cooper in the third person. "Alice wouldn't do that," he explained.

I learned there were two Alice Coopers.

I found this very comfortable: Alice Cooper the person is his own affair; Alice Cooper the character is something else again. He's larger than life. He's theatre. Alice Cooper is a horror icon. He's up there with Larry Talbot and Count Dracula, with Jason and Freddie. Alice Cooper is hanged and guillotined; Alice writhes with snakes and flees the madhouse. He was even the star of his own Marvel comic.

I liked him enormously. And I liked the idea of creating a story with Alice — something that could be used to build an album.

I learned there were two Alice Coopers.

Somewhere in there things changed. We were no longer feeling each other out, deciding whether or not we wanted to work together. We *were* working together. I suggested a few ideas to him. He liked some of them, wasn't as keen on others. We talked about the feel we wanted, the shape, the characters. . .

I went home to England, talked with Alice some more on the phone, and began to write a story: the story of a boy named Steven, and a strange theatre, and a Showman with a strange resemblance to Alice Cooper — part Machiavellian ghost, part commentator, part demon.

It's the story of a deal Steven is offered; of a theatrical performance he attends; of his parents, his schoolfriends, his teachers, and, ultimately, his temptation. . .

The next time I saw Alice six months had passed, and we were back in the same hotel in Phoenix. We sat in a hotel room and I listened to tapes of the first few songs he'd written, and I watched Alice and his collaborators write another three songs while I sat on a bed, occasionally making suggestions for lyrics and song titles.

A lightning storm came in from the desert, and we sat outside on the hotel balcony and watched the storm buffet the eucalyptus trees, while Alice told us about The Time He Met Elvis.

It was coming together. That was obvious.

Another few months went by, and I was in a recording studio in Los Angeles. It's odd: one minute it was just a plot in my head, the next it was an honest-to-goodness rock and roll concept album. Real musicians. Real Alice Cooper.

I'm not sure when it was suggested, or by whom, that we should do a comic. It wasn't a hard decision to make, though. I found the idea challenging. Rock stars have been cropping up in comics for decades; Kiss emptied their veins into the first printing of their comic, or so we were told, and Jimmy Olsen, if I remember correctly, was the Stone-Age Beatle of 30,000 BC. But the comics (we might as well be honest, here) weren't terribly good, and I didn't see why there *couldn't* be a good rock comic.

The wax statue of the writer smiles, nods, closes its mouth and, mechanically, returns to the position it was in to begin with. Its skin has the sheen of old wax, or of a fresh corpse.

The showman turns to you. There's something skull-like in his smile, something wolf-like in his eyes.

"Is there anything else you need to know?" he asks.

You shake your head, nervously, and begin to back away through the tent, and the wax people. You would feel far more comfortable back in the graveyard, of that you have no doubt at all.

The showman gestures.

One by one the candles flicker and go out, casting strange shadows across the inside of the tent as they die, shadows that make the wax figures seem to move, to clamber down from their pedestals, to walk towards you.

"Don't go," says the Showman. "We've got other things to show you." He is fumbling with one gloved hand in his shirt. "Look."

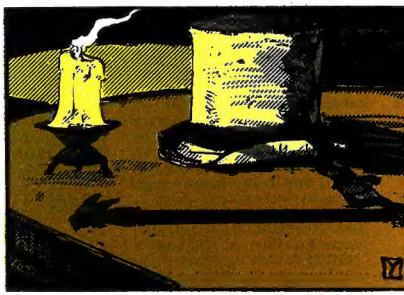
His hand emerges, holding a human heart. His own, you assume. It's still beating, if slowly.

"Would you like it?"

You shake your head, looking around frantically for the way out. The House of Wax goes on forever. You're all alone.

The rustling gets louder now. It seems to come from all around you.

And then the last candle goes out.



There were chunks of plot that hadn't made it onto the album, after all. It would be good to get it all down. (Although that was before I knew I'd be writing another version of the story for an interactive computer game, and I would have to figure out not only the bits of story that didn't make it into the comic, but also the bits of story that didn't make it into the story.)

Michael Zulli — Salvador Dali lookalike, artist and co-creator of ecological SF series *Puma Blues*, author of by far the strangest and darkest interpretation of the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*; occasional interpreter, with me, of *The Sandman*, and my partner in crime in *Sweeney Todd, The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* — is one of the most fascinating, grimmest and delightful artists in the business, and would be the perfect artist for the project. . .if he was interested.

I called him, and to my delight he was.

Top painter Dave McKean (*Arkham Asylum*, *Cages*) agreed to do not only the covers to the comics, but also the cover to the album (he's won design awards for his CD covers in the past). Todd Klein was willing to letter the comic, and Sherilyn van Valkenburg to colour the comic. This was starting to get exciting.

Marvel Comics had published Alice's first furious foray into four-colour fiction, and they made it very clear that they would beat out any opposition from any other comic company to publish the 1994 comic as well.

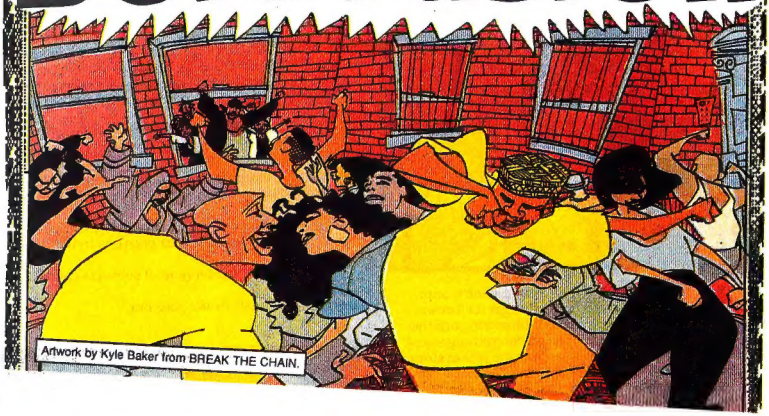
Somewhere in there I was sent a tape of the album. It's the best thing, in my opinion, Alice Cooper has done since *Welcome to My Nightmare*. It's called *The Last Temptation*.

And that's the story so far. . .

Except for the weird stuff that we haven't figured out yet — how to package a comic with a CD, for example. How to send people from the record shops into the comic shops, and vice versa. People from Sony are talking to people from Marvel. Strange new marketing ideas are being explored, and I watch the whole procedure with the same amount of fascination that I have the entire strange, delightful process, which began with a phone call, and hasn't stopped yet.

– Neil Gaiman

Marvel and Music — a Bold Fusion



Artwork by Kyle Baker from BREAK THE CHAIN.

Rock and comics — they've been reviled by authority figures for years, and now it's time for them to seriously gang together to form the *Marvel Music Line.*

Marvel's rock and music titles have been in the development stages since last year's hiring of Editor Mort Todd, with projects including **BREAK THE CHAIN** (created with rapper **KRS-One**) and **THE LAST TEMPTATION OF ALICE** (starring rock musician Alice Cooper). More recently, Michael Warlow has been named as publisher for Marvel Music, bringing with him more than twenty years experience in the music industry and publishing.

As to their approach to the comics/music hybrid, Todd commented, "These books are going to be on a completely higher level, when compared with the public perception of rock comics. We're going to do fully licensed high-profile projects — no bootleg stuff. In fact, we're going to call the series *Marvel Music*, because it's more than just comics."

> "Each book will become an entity unto itself."

Warlow added, "Each book will become an entity unto itself. The projects will stand or fall on their own. The base of each project is the interaction we have with the actual musical artists. The musicians themselves are included in the conceiving and development of their project. We're offering [these books] to artists, as a different pallet of colors to paint with."

Continuing enthusiastically, Todd elaborated: "It can go in any direction, really. An artist may adapt a song, tell an adventure, or tell their life story. I expect that, once this gets rolling, we'll see musicians who want to be in on Marvel Music comics call us, which will make our job a lot *easier.*"

Both Todd and Warlow agreed that the very *distribution* of the comics added to the massive scale of the project, allowing them to reach vast, largely untapped, and very enthusiastic audiences.

The masterminds behind BREAK THE CHAIN (left to right): Kyle Baker, KRS-One, and Marshall Chess in the recording studio. Photograph by Marti Wilkerson.

THE LAST TEMPTATION OF ALICE

One of the first rock comics to see light of day will be the **THE LAST TEMPTATION OF ALICE.** "The Alice Cooper project," Todd said," is written by Neil Gaiman, of *Sandman* fame. The concept and everything in the project were written in collaboration with Alice Cooper for his new Epic/Sony CD, *The Last Temptation*

of Alice, which includes songs like *Unholy War*, *Sideshow*, and *Bad Place Home*. These elements help tell a great story unique to Marvel.

"Michael Zulli is the penciler and inker of the book. He's done *Puma Blues*, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, and recently painted a poster for DC's *Swamp Thing*. When people see his art, the response is going to be unbelievable. Dave McKean *(Arkham Asylum, Cages)* will paint the covers for the comics and the CD release.

"What we are looking for is the high calibre of projects like the recent **MARVELS.**"

"It should be out in April or May. It's a 3-issue series of 32-page, full color comics and the first issue will be released with and without the new Alice Cooper CD, which — off the record, if you'll pardon the pun — is a hint of some of the new channels we'll be able to open up with this new series," he revealed. The cover price was still to be determined at press time.

Mike Warlow interjected, "What we are looking for is the high calibre of projects like the recent **MARVELS.** That's a project that you can show to someone whether they're comics fans or not. And with the projects we're hoping to do, we really are trying to make each release distinct and of the *highest* quality. The plan for Marvel Music is to create a full range of licensed, illustrated books."

BREAK THE CHAIN

As outlined in **MARVEL AGE #130**, **BREAK THE CHAIN** is a new quarterly series created by Marshall Chess, **KRS-One**, and Kyle Baker, that mixes the best of comics with the best of rap music. Like the Alice Cooper project, it will be a series of 32-page comics but on glossy "Venom" stock. "**BREAK THE CHAIN** will break new ground," Warlow said. "It's coming out in late spring, early summer. Along with the comic is an audio cassette featuring three *new* rap songs by **KRS-One.**"

"There are too many comic books that don't say anything to anyone anymore."

The cassette provides a "soundtrack" for the comic book, dramatizing the dialogue in addition to the music. In developing this project, the creative team hope to entertain and to entice more people to read. "This project has a great deal of scholastic appeal," Warlow continued. "What makes the project so great is that it's been thoroughly thought through and conceived for *both* the comics and music. As time goes on, the series should feature and focus on different name rappers."

"The message behind BREAK THE CHAIN is about self-empowerment," Todd observed. "It makes you realize that you can do anything you want to do through knowledge. It was the original concept of producer Marshall Chess, whose father started the blues label Chess Records. Marshall expects that this is going to be the sort of thing that people listen to and read over and over again.

"We want to do something that's going to *say* something to people," said Todd. "There are too many comic books that don't say anything to anyone anymore."

Alice Cooper and Neil Gaiman.
Photo courtesy of Neil Gaiman.

BOB MARLEY

Mort Todd also described a planned new Bob Marley project, which unlike Alice Cooper, will work as a biography of the famous reggae musician. "We've been working very closely with the Marley Estate," he said. "A Jamaican painter named Tennyson Smith is doing the covers for the series — fans may recognize his work from the covers of the **BOOK OF THE DEAD.** There's also a musician named Charles E. Hall who has written the series. He just finished scripting the Marvelized version of C.S. Lewis' **SCREWTAPE LETTERS.**"

Plans and agreements with different stars and estates are still in various stages, and a major announcement will be forthcoming soon, Todd and Warlow agreed, as outlined next month in **MARVEL AGE #137.**

Art by Tennyson Smith.
TM & © 1994 Bob Marley Music, Inc.

– *Jim Krueger*

SMELLS LIKE TEEN TROUBLE

Why should teens who can rocket through the sky, crush a tank, and boil someone's brain pay attention during history class?

Because if they don't do their homework, the next generation of heroes may become trapped in the past. The New Warriors are about to find out the hard way that those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it in "Time and Time Again," an eight-part crossover linking NOVA #6 and #7, NIGHT THRASHER #11 and #12, and NEW WARRIORS #47 through the double-sized 50th issue.

SPHINX JINX

In this sequel to the popular "Forever Yesterday" storyline (NEW WARRIORS issues #11-#13), the male and female Sphinxes return to exact revenge upon the tenacious teens who previously foiled their mad quests. Just as the female Sphinx remade reality to capture the love of her male counterpart in "Forever Yesterday," the male Sphinx will also alter time for personal gain.

His gamble of greed begins when he attacks Sayge, the mysterious white-hooded bearer of truth who has shadowed the Sphinxes' maniacal moves. "The Sayge represents the truth, so after the Sphinxes take out the truth, it's a matter of playing with reality from there on," Rob Tokar, editor of the New Warriors family of books, said.

"He then wants to eliminate the Warriors from the scheme of things because he is afraid of Nova and what he can do. To make them endure the same agony he had to, [The Sphinx] dispenses them throughout time," Fabian Nicieza, one of Marvel's busiest raconteurs and writer of the New Warrior trio, revealed.

The Sphinx does not send the teens to random points in the past; rather he deliberately separates the team, selecting locations and times which will force each character to confront a dark page from their family album.

"This move makes sense, motivationally, from The Sphinx's viewpoint, because when he battled Galactus [in the pages of THE FANTASTIC FOUR #212] — which was his first shot at the big time — Galactus didn't *kill* him at the end.

THRASH AND NOVA: CHAINED TO THE PAST?

Rather than try and squeeze all eight characters' adventures into NEW WARRIORS, Nicieza felt it was natural to do a crossover with both NOVA and NIGHT THRASHER, so in NIGHT THRASHER #11 and #12 (by Nicieza and penciler David Boller), Dwayne Taylor must fight for his freedom as he maneuvers through the shameful chapter of American history when the color of one's skin condemned men and women to the nightmare of slavery.

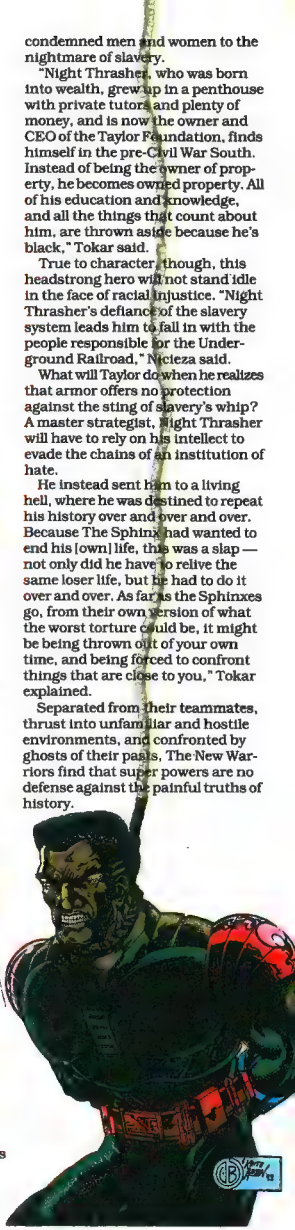
"Night Thrasher, who was born into wealth, grew up in a penthouse with private tutors and plenty of money, and is now the owner and CEO of the Taylor Foundation, finds himself in the pre-Civil War South. Instead of being the owner of property, he becomes owned property. All of his education and knowledge, and all the things that count about him, are thrown aside because he's black," Tokar said.

True to character, though, this headstrong hero will not stand idle in the face of racial injustice. "Night Thrasher's defiance of the slavery system leads him to fall in with the people responsible for the Underground Railroad," Nicieza said.

What will Taylor do when he realizes that armor offers no protection against the sting of slavery's whip? A master strategist, Night Thrasher will have to rely on his intellect to evade the chains of an institution of hate.

He instead sent him to a living hell, where he was destined to repeat his history over and over and over. Because The Sphinx had wanted to end his [own] life, this was a slap — not only did he have to relive the same loser life, but he had to do it over and over. As far as the Sphinxes go, from their own version of what the worst torture could be, it might be being thrown out of your own time, and being forced to confront things that are close to you," Tokar explained.

Separated from their teammates, thrust into unfamiliar and hostile environments, and confronted by ghosts of their pasts, The New Warriors find that super powers are no defense against the painful truths of history.



. . . super powers are no defense against the painful truths of history.

Rather than confronting the faceless evil of bigotry, Nova will encounter an enemy who *definitely* has a face: his own. In NOVA issues #6 and #7, by Nicieza, Chris Marrinan, and Mark Stegbauer, the human rocket will blast into a parallel timeline in which there exists an alternate self who had never given up his powers. "As a result, [this Nova] is a much more confident, capable, and revered hero," Nicieza said.

"It's sort of like *It's a Wonderful Life*, only backwards — here he sees what his life would have been like if he hadn't given up his powers years ago. In this case, he finds out what a great success he would have been. Basically, it's really hard on him because he has such a fragile ego," Tokar added.

How will a vastly talented but insecure teenager handle the fact that he may have squandered his potential and missed his only chance of success? If he returns home, how will this knowledge affect his role as a hero?

A TEAM DIVIDED = A TEAM CONQUERED

While Nova and Night Thrasher grapple with personal challenges in their own titles, their teammates will face similar situations in the pages of NEW WARRIORS #47 through #50. These four chapters will chronicle the plights of Justice, the stoic telekinetic, Rage, the rampaging power house, Kymaera, the Atlantean hybrid, Silhouette, the shadow teleporter, Firestar, the mutant master of radiation, and Speedball, the ricocheting wise guy.

"Justice goes back to the '50s and meets up with his abusive father, whom he murdered, and sees this guy as a teen and tries to figure out what made him into the violent creep he became. Supposedly, children of abusive parents end up often becoming abusive parents themselves. You tend to fall into the patterns you've seen a lot, and even though you don't approve of them as a kid, you might emulate them later because you've seen this is the way an adult acts. This story will not only show him that his father was abused also, but it also opens up some *new* questions for him that we actually have plans for in the upcoming Justice limited series," Tokar commented.

"Silhouette journeys to Cambodia about 100 or 200 years ago. There she meets a young Tai, who is 15 and developing and beginning to abuse her powers," Nicieza said.

"She faces the old question, 'if you met Hitler as a baby, would you kill him?' Silhouette faces that question, not with Hitler, but with her grandmother Tai, who was the one directly responsible for the deaths of Night Thrasher's parents, and also tried to sacrifice The Warriors. Silhouette has the ability to kill this woman and prevent all the tragedy in Night Thrasher's life, but of course that would have also prevented him from forming the Warriors, and her from meeting him," Tokar added.

"Kymaera goes back to feudal Atlantis, when it was a very savage place, when there were warlords and sorcerers. So after the whole clone question [has been] answered by issue #44, she's thrown back to this feudal age when the Atlanteans were almost cavemen, and she sees how she fits in, or if she fits in at all," Tokar said.

Rage, the thirteen-year-old boy in a mega-powered adult body, was shocked by the brutal murder of his grandmother in NEW WARRIORS #37. His feeling of abandonment may change after he experiences a crash course in his cultural background.

"Rage was brought up as an American — he really doesn't know that much about his real ancestral heritage. He finds himself transported hundreds of years ago to Africa, to see where he came from, what the cultures were like, and what the people were like," Tokar explained. "But when he finds the early slave traders are there, he definitely does *not* like what he sees."

Firestar will be dropped into a true hot spot — the Salem witch trials. At a time when women were executed

out of fear of their sexuality, the beautiful wielder of microwave energy would be a natural target for persecution. It may be the Puritan judges, however, who are the ones scorched when they try to burn Firestar at the stake.

Tokar remarked that "we keep thinking something nice should happen to Speedball. Maybe he should end up as Cindy Crawford's boy toy — and of course he wouldn't want to come back."

While The New Warriors face challenges ranging from the physical to the psychological, they all share a common goal: to survive and get back to their own time period. Although they do not realize it, they are not completely without help, as their friends at their "pad" attempt to rescue them in a double-sized finale. The arrival of guest stars in this anniversary issue may trigger mutations in the team's lineup.

"Being scattered, none of them have the powers or the connections that could get them somewhere. They don't have any cosmic connections like The Fantastic Four, or the mystical connections like Doctor Strange. With The Warriors lost in time, the only people who are left that are connected to them are Chord, Night Thrasher's guardian, and Hindsight Lad. So [those two] get together and pull together some 'new' New Warriors to rescue the original Warriors. Some of the people who would be in that group would be Dagger, Alex Power (of Power Pack), Darkhawk, and Turbo," Tokar reported.

"Although it's not definite, that may result in a slightly revamped Warrior lineup," Nicieza hinted.

The arrival of guest stars. . .may trigger mutations in the team's lineup.

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

While a membership alteration was, at press time, undecided, what *is* certain is that this crossover — in typical Nicieza style — will force the characters to make tough decisions as psyches are probed, emotions are manipulated, and powerful themes are explored.

"This last year I've been building on the theme of power — of an increased level of power, the use and abuse of this power, and the responsibility that comes with this power. This story will continue to build upon that theme and the idea of the importance of history. Young people don't have enough sense of history, so this story will explore what history means to these people," Nicieza said.

"The Warriors have always been about doing what's right, no matter what, and getting at the truth. And here they're going to get a lot of truths, not just about their actual pasts, but about themselves in the decisions that they make when they're confronted with these pasts," Tokar added.

This quest for truth, no matter the consequences, is a central concern of the entire NEW WARRIORS series. Confronting tough issues, questioning the status quo, and challenging absolutes are all reoccurring themes of the New Warrior family of books.

Darick Robertson, artist of NEW WARRIORS since issue #26, has had a clear influence on the development of the book's look and attitude. By redesigning the Warrior's costumes to reflect each character's personality, he feels he has helped create "one of the most honest reflections of teenagers in a screwed-up world.

"One of the reasons I like the series is that Fabian makes [the characters] into real people — not just super heroes. I enjoy working on characters with personality — every character (in the book) has a distinct personality. I try to give Fabian center stage — it's his baby, he loves this book. He tends to put more heart in this than anything else," Robertson praised.

Tokar agrees that, in addition to Robertson's stylized pencils, NEW WARRIORS benefits from Nicieza's ability to write a story that not only entertains, but challenges its readers to think.

"Growing up, even from infancy, is a continual testing of limits. The Warriors are still growing up, and with their situations, they haven't become complacent — they are *more*

TIME AND TIME AGAIN

MARCH:
NEW WARRIORS #47

APRIL:
NIGHT THRASHER #11
NOVA #6
NEW WARRIORS #48

MAY:
NIGHT THRASHER #12
NOVA #7
NEW WARRIORS #49

JUNE:
NEW WARRIORS #50

willing to face the truth. The truth is something that's really easy to hide, especially from yourself. They keep digging it up, they keep poking the sore spot of themselves, they keep looking for what it is," Tokar analyzed. "They don't accept some false, easier reality — they don't want to gloss over something by denying it or ignoring it. They want to know — and that yearning for absolutes, for 'the truth,' which you could say would almost be impossible, is indicative of youth.

"They're always trying. If these characters were thirty, this would be a different book. I don't consider it naivete, but more of a pure sense of possibilities that you have as an adolescent," Nicieza commented.

"If there's anything The Warriors would say, it's 'wake up!' They believe very strongly in being awake, being attentive, looking around, seeing what is going on — for good or for ill — and then acting upon it," Tokar said.

What does the future hold for these turbulent teens? What lies beyond the "Time and Time Again" double-sized final chapter? "If one was to gaze into the crystal ball of the Warriors, they could become the best of what the Avengers and the X-Men embody — a combination of rebels and the status quo," Nicieza said. The New Warriors stand for a sense of idealism that the next generation always has, fueled by a desire not to repeat the same mistakes."

Never before have the New Warriors had to so literally avoid the mistakes of their predecessors than in "Time and Time Again," and this date with destiny may end with the kiss of death.

– Bill Rosemann

Photo by Paula Foye

Left: Chris Marrinan, penciler for NOVA. **Above:** Writer Fabian Nicieza and NEW WARRIORS penciler Darick Robertson. **Top:** Are these the *new* New Warriors? Artwork by Darick Robertson and Larry Mahlstedt.

Blackwulf

- Lord Tantalus — ruler of the Peacekeepers
- Blackwulf — Underground leader, rebel scion of Tantalus
- Lucian — Tantalus's loyal son
- Wraath — giant, bionic Peacekeeper
- Mammoth — mammoth rebel
- Wildwind — ruler of the air currents
- Toxin — chemical-manipulator
- Schizo — bizarre illusion caster

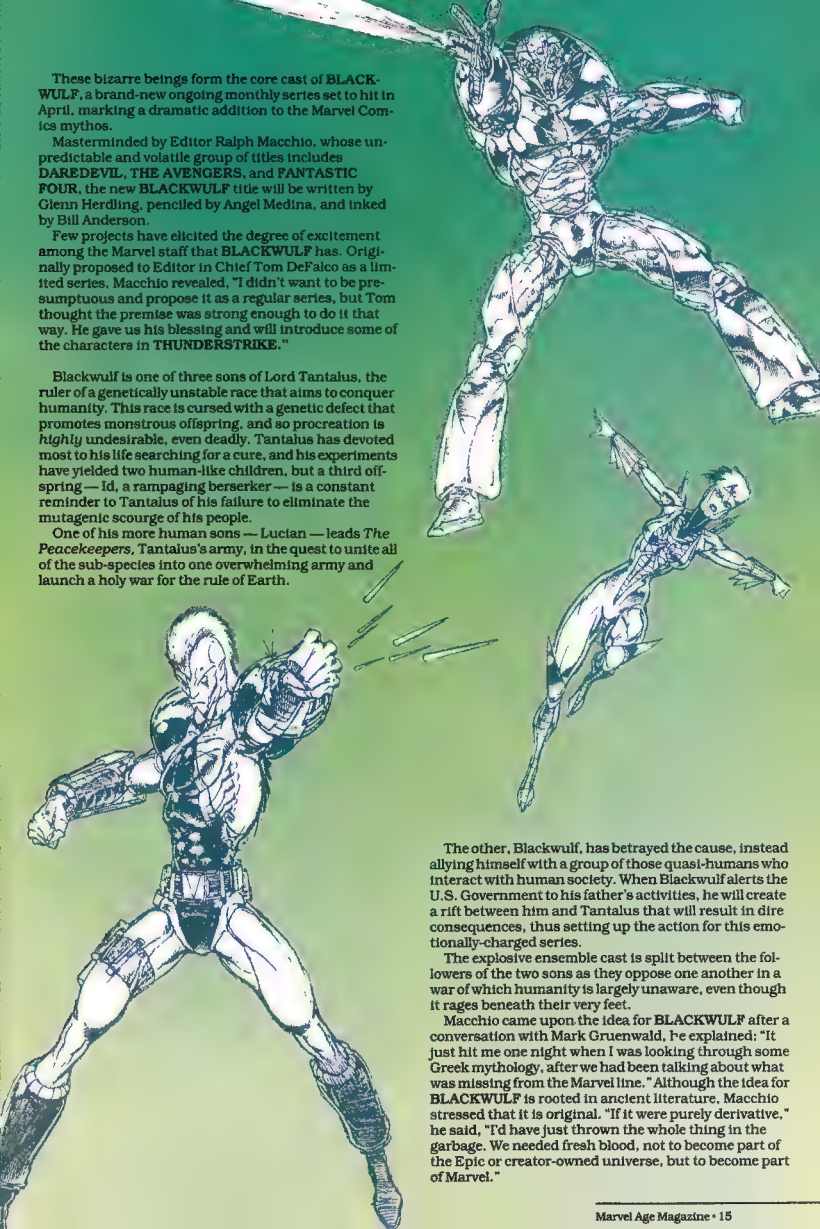
These bizarre beings form the core cast of **BLACKWULF**, a brand-new ongoing monthly series set to hit in April, marking a dramatic addition to the Marvel Comics mythos.

Masterminded by Editor Ralph Macchio, whose unpredictable and volatile group of titles includes **DAREDEVIL**, **THE AVENGERS**, and **FANTASTIC FOUR**, the new **BLACKWULF** title will be written by Glenn Herdling, penciled by Angel Medina, and inked by Bill Anderson.

Few projects have elicited the degree of excitement among the Marvel staff that **BLACKWULF** has. Originally proposed to Editor in Chief Tom DeFalco as a limited series, Macchio revealed, "I didn't want to be presumptuous and propose it as a regular series, but Tom thought the premise was strong enough to do it that way. He gave us his blessing and will introduce some of the characters in **THUNDERSTRIKE**."

Blackwulf is one of three sons of Lord Tantalus, the ruler of a genetically unstable race that aims to conquer humanity. This race is cursed with a genetic defect that promotes monstrous offspring, and so procreation is *highly* undesirable, even deadly. Tantalus has devoted most to his life searching for a cure, and his experiments have yielded two human-like children, but a third offspring — Id, a rampaging berserker — is a constant reminder to Tantalus of his failure to eliminate the mutagenic scourge of his people.

One of his more human sons — Lucian — leads *The Peacekeepers*, Tantalus's army, in the quest to unite all of the sub-species into one overwhelming army and launch a holy war for the rule of Earth.



The other, Blackwulf, has betrayed the cause, instead allying himself with a group of those quasi-humans who interact with human society. When Blackwulf alerts the U.S. Government to his father's activities, he will create a rift between him and Tantalus that will result in dire consequences, thus setting up the action for this emotionally-charged series.

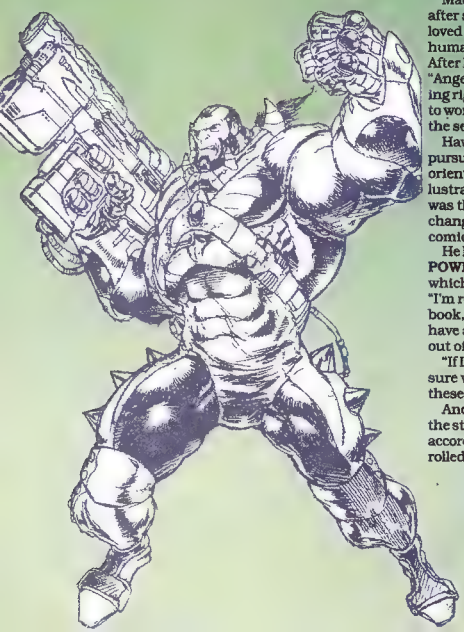
The explosive ensemble cast is split between the followers of the two sons as they oppose one another in a war of which humanity is largely unaware, even though it rages beneath their very feet.

Macchio came upon the idea for **BLACKWULF** after a conversation with Mark Gruenwald, he explained: "It just hit me one night when I was looking through some Greek mythology, after we had been talking about what was missing from the Marvel line." Although the idea for **BLACKWULF** is rooted in ancient literature, Macchio stressed that it is original. "If it were purely derivative," he said, "I'd have just thrown the whole thing in the garbage. We needed fresh blood, not to become part of the Epic or creator-owned universe, but to become part of Marvel."

Although Macchio created the characters, "it's up to Glenn to develop their personalities and the interactions between them," he said. "I certainly consider Glenn to be a full partner on **BLACKWULF**. I think he has a good sense of the history of the Marvel Universe; he's aware of the pitfalls of the books that failed at other companies. I told Glenn, 'This is not a book I'm going to write by proxy.' I don't want the creative team on this project to just be a pair of hands."

According to Herdling, "Ralph creates things and likes to see other people put them into motion." Indeed, Macchio credits Herdling with coming up with a pivotal scene in the beginning of **BLACKWULF** that has made the series the subject of much "water cooler" conversation at Marvel. Herdling had no problem finding the inspiration for that "magic moment," due to the strength of the material and synergy that exists between him, Macchio, and Medina. "I wish all editorial projects went this smoothly. We're really meshing," he said, attributing that fact to Macchio's laissez-faire approach to the development of the series. "He's pretty open to Angel's suggestions about the look of the characters."

Medina agrees. "It's the first time an editor — heck, it's the first time anybody's paid me this much attention. I call [Macchio and Herdling] up if there's a snag, if I don't agree with something or if something doesn't work, and I'll keep them on the phone until we work it out."



Macchio handpicked Medina to draw **BLACKWULF** after seeing his work for another Marvel series. "I just loved his work on **WARLOCK**," he said. "He could do human figures, but he also has a sense of cosmic scale." After Macchio had outlined the premise of **BLACKWULF**, "Angel seemed to hit upon what Glenn and I were thinking right away. I told him, 'Just put on paper what seems to work in your head,' and we only needed to redo two of the series' many character sketches.

Having been drawing since the age of three, Medina pursued this hobby in high school, where he took "comic-oriented" art classes. In college, he took commercial illustration courses to alter his drawing style. "College was the best thing that ever happened to me because it changed my style — made it smoother. I still had that comic influence, but it was more natural."

He has just finished penciling an issue of the **COSMIC POWERS** limited series and raves about **BLACKWULF**, which will begin to occupy all of his creative energies. "I'm real, real excited about it. I'm really tough on this book, but I also decided this was something I'm going to have a lot of fun with, so Marvel can get my best effort out of it."

"If I hadn't gotten Angel," Macchio remarked. "I wasn't sure who else would give me what I wanted. He can give these characters the stature they require."

And they do require considerable stature, especially the star of the series. "Blackwulf is the ultimate leader," according to Herdling. "He's Captain America and Cyclops rolled into one."

– ***Terry Hernon***

Stan's SOAP BOX

Hi Heroes!

By now, most of you literature lovers have undoubtedly sought out the first of the *Riftworld* novels, and are eagerly anticipating the debut of the comic book version! And that, students, is our subject for today!

Since all Marvelites are incredibly sharp-eyed, you've probably noticed that the full title is *"Stan Lee's Riftworld."* That wasn't done because I love to see my name in print — although I'll admit I do get a kick out of it. It was lettered that way because I didn't actually write the book! It was written by my good friend, Bill McCay, a terrific story teller whose previous novel had been on the *New York Times* Best-Seller List!

So why does it say *"Stan Lee's Riftworld"*? I thought you'd never ask. It's because I dreamed up the characters and the plot, but unfortunately I didn't have time to actually write the story. Although I probably shouldn't say "unfortunately," because it would be mighty hard to do a better job than Bill.

At any rate, the first in the series of *Stan Lee's Riftworld* books was entitled "Crossover." It had a tremendous first sale, but if any of you missed it, there may still be a copy or two left at some isolated bookstores. It's a paperback novel, with some terrific illustrations by my buddy Dave Gibbons, and is published by Roc, the science-fiction arm of Penguin Books. That's the whole scoop, so now if you miss it, you've got absolutely no excuse!

When I was talking recently to **MARVEL AGE'S** ebullient editor, Snappy Stevie Saffel, he asked how I feel about shifting gears from comics to projects like *Riftworld* and how I go about engaging in my own brand of "world building." He thought the multifaceted multitudes of maniacal **MARVEL AGE** readers might like to know. So, just for your benefit, here goes. . .

I suppose I've always been a "gear shifter." To me, a writer is someone who writes — whether it be comics, books, articles, screenplays, or ads. In fact, even within the comic book field, over the years I've enjoyed switching from horror stories to war stories to romance tales to western yarns to humor books or whatever. I remember joking with my pal Roy Thomas years ago and saying that there's no difference, for instance, between a crime story and a western. In the crime story you say, "Follow that car, man!" In the western you say, "Follow that stagecoach, hombre!" But hey, a story's a story, right? You just change the external trappings depending upon the genre.

So going from comics to creating novels isn't really much of a leap; all the same rules apply. You need exciting, believable characters, mounting suspense, sudden surprises, and a plot that grabs you. It also helps to have a great guy like Bill McCay put it all together for you!

As far as how I engage in my own brand of "world building," that's a little tougher to explain. In attempting to create a new fictional universe, the first thing a writer needs is that one unique springboard idea, an idea that grabs you and effortlessly leads to a whole kaboodle of other ideas. Whether the idea is as simple as, "How about a guy with the proportionate powers of a spider?" or, as in the case of Riftworld, "How about a typical New York comic book company suddenly encountering two real twenty-foot tall super heroes from another dimension?"

Once that initial thought hits you, if it's the right concept, other ideas and story points start piling up in your head until you've got to get it written or explode! In my case, having no desire to explode, I never stray too far from my trusty ol' computer!

And there you have it; my long-awaited comic book confessional! The moral, of course, being — watch your step when you talk to Steve Saffel. Or, to put it another way, *"Omnia Vincit Amor!"*

Excelsior!

– Stan Lee

Stan Lee's
FROM STAN LEE, THE MOST POPULAR WRITER IN THE HISTORY OF COMICS
RIFTWORLD
VILLAINS
BILL McCAY
New York Times Bestselling Author
ROC • 451-LE5533 • (CANADA $5.50) • U.S. $4.50
ROC

At Stake

What can a lone man, armed with wooden stakes, canny instinct, and an unrelenting obsession, do against one of the oldest supernatural societies in the Marvel Universe — a society whose victims include the likes of Spider-Man, The Silver Surfer, and The X-Men?

This is a society whose numbers grow exponentially as they stalk unwitting prey under the stealth of night; of beings who never age; of hunters that need human blood as surely as normal men and women need water. This evil host will be the target of **BLADE** in an ongoing monthly title from Marvel launching the first week of May.

The rumors and superstitions are true. Vampires have returned to drain the life-blood from the Marvel Universe. Blade, the title character in this series, is a vampire hunter engaged in a solitary war to obliterate them. Editor Chris Cooper outlined the dramatic plans in store for this exciting new Midnight Sons title and revealed how it will upset the status quo of the Marvel Universe at large.

The Nightstalkers, Blade's team of adventurers who were dedicated to destroying supernatural menaces whenever and wherever they reared their ghastly heads, are dead. They met their demise in the last issue of their own title in a cataclysmic clash with Varnae, the eldest vampire. With the loss of his companions — Hannibal King and Frank Drake — and the return of these unholy legions, Blade's mission is to destroy them all.

> . . .Blade's mission is to destroy them all.

It won't be the easiest of missions. Blade is a very unique character in today's high-powered action/adventure scene. Unlike most other Marvel characters who are featured in their own series, he has no overtly superhuman abilities. He isn't a mutant, he doesn't wear a sophisticated suit of body armor, and he wasn't pricked by a radioactive cactus. This can be a drawback, especially when facing the legions of the undead.

Why, then, does he do it? Is he crazy?

No. Blade's mother was killed by the vampire Deacon Frost at the moment of his birth. This not only gave Blade his ultimate motivation, but it also granted him the ability to sense the presence of vampires. He is a man torn between his obsessive pursuit of these creatures of the night and the possibility of a normal life. This is ironic, because it renders him more like a vampire than a human in the fact that his existence is not normal or average in any sense.

Supporting characters will constantly reveal to him what it is like to have a life unburdened by this war against the supernatural and will even beckon him to join them at times, as in the case of a future love-interest planned for the series. However, it is more than likely that the threat of the undead will bar him from this type of life.

BLADE will mesh with the other Midnight Sons titles in its role as part of a greater saga, all the while maintaining a unique, quirky "stand-by-itself" quality. However, it will differ from the rest of the family in that the bloodthirsty threat it will present is *greater*, despite the fact that the hero is the least powerful of the Midnight Sons. Chris noted that **BLADE** is socially relevant to our times because it

. . .BLADE. . .will attempt to show an underlying symbolic parallel between vampirism and drug addiction.

will attempt to show an underlying symbolic parallel between vampirism and drug addiction. The stories will use vampirism as a metaphor for one of society's greatest and most destructive ills.

The title's goal is also to appeal to fans of classic horror — as well as to fans of the more action-oriented fare — by taking a modern approach to the vampire mythos. These contemporary vampires, although few and far between, are tough as nails, far more so than their predecessors in terror. They are corporate blood-suckers who deal money for blood, and vice versa. They are powerful, and hold high rank in this echelon of the undead, while it is the depraved blood-junkies among them who prey at the very bottom of the food chain.

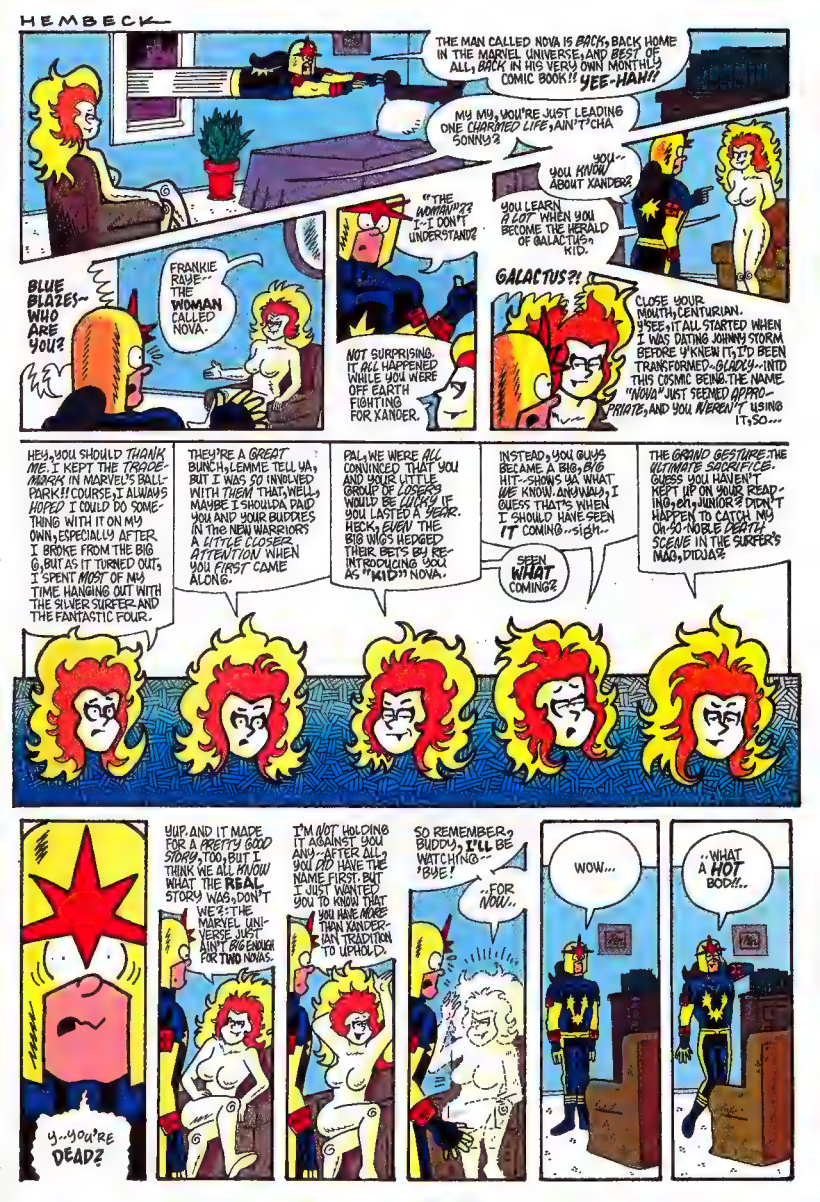
Blade must confront a vampire at the very top of the hierarchy in the series' first story-arc. Since this foe is certainly the most powerful (and fictionally popular) vampire of all time, Blade will not have an easy time in this confrontation.

The villain, of course, is none other than the original Lord of the Vampires — Count Dracula!

The quintessential kingpin of the crypt returns to plague the Marvel Universe after having been presumed destroyed for all time. How has this unholy abomination triumphed over the ultimate death? What is his bloody plan this time?

It will be these questions and others that Blade must answer in his first issue! Writer Ian Edginton *(Aliens, Terminator)*, new Marvel penciler Doug Wheatley, Jr., and inker Chris Ivy *(Ghost Rider)* will lay bare the threat of vampirism in the Marvel Universe and its effect on all inhabitants. **BLADE #1** will be a 32-page comic, appropriately printed on bleed paper, with a $1.95 retail price, and will be available at comics specialty shops and newsstands beginning the first week of May.

– Karl Bollers


HEMBECK
THE MAN CALLED NOVA IS BACK, BACK HOME IN THE MARVEL UNIVERSE, AND BEST OF ALL, BACK IN HIS VERY OWN MONTHLY COMIC BOOK!! YEE-HAH!!
MY MY, YOU'RE JUST LEADING ONE CHARMED LIFE, AIN'T'CHA SONNY?
YOU-- YOU KNOW ABOUT XANDER?
YOU LEARN A LOT WHEN YOU BECOME THE HERALD OF GALACTUS, KID.
"THE WOMAN"?? I--I DON'T UNDERSTAND?
NOT SURPRISING. IT ALL HAPPENED WHILE YOU WERE OFF EARTH FIGHTING FOR XANDER.
GALACTUS?!
CLOSE YOUR MOUTH, CENTURIAN. Y'SEE, IT ALL STARTED WHEN I WAS DATING JOHNNY STORM BEFORE Y'KNEW IT, I'D BEEN TRANSFORMED--GLADLY--INTO THIS COSMIC BEING. THE NAME "NOVA" JUST SEEMED APPROPRIATE, AND YOU WEREN'T USING IT, SO...
BLUE BLAZES-- WHO ARE YOU?
FRANKIE RAYE-- THE WOMAN CALLED NOVA.
HEY, YOU SHOULD THANK ME. I KEPT THE TRADEMARK IN MARVEL'S BALLPARK!! COURSE, I ALWAYS HOPED I COULD DO SOMETHING WITH IT ON MY OWN, ESPECIALLY AFTER I BROKE FROM THE BIG G, BUT AS IT TURNED OUT, I SPENT MOST OF MY TIME HANGING OUT WITH THE SILVER SURFER AND THE FANTASTIC FOUR.
THEY'RE A GREAT BUNCH, LEMME TELL YA, BUT I WAS SO INVOLVED WITH THEM THAT, WELL, MAYBE I SHOULDA PAID YOU AND YOUR BUDDIES IN THE NEW WARRIORS A LITTLE CLOSER ATTENTION WHEN YOU FIRST CAME ALONG.
PAL, WE WERE ALL CONVINCED THAT YOU AND YOUR LITTLE GROUP OF LOSERS WOULD BE LUCKY IF YOU LASTED A YEAR. HECK, EVEN THE BIG WIGS HEDGED THEIR BETS BY RE-INTRODUCING YOU AS "KID" NOVA.
INSTEAD, YOU GUYS BECAME A BIG, BIG HIT--SHOWS YA WHAT WE KNOW. ANYWAY, I GUESS THAT'S WHEN I SHOULD HAVE SEEN IT COMING--sigh--
SEEN WHAT COMING?
THE GRAND GESTURE. THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE. GUESS YOU HAVEN'T KEPT UP ON YOUR READING, EH, JUNIOR? DON'T HAPPEN TO CATCH MY Oh-SO-NOBLE DEATH SCENE IN THE SURFER'S MAG, DIDJA?
Y--YOU'RE DEAD?
YUP. AND IT MADE FOR A PRETTY GOOD STORY, TOO, BUT I THINK WE ALL KNOW WHAT THE REAL STORY WAS, DON'T WE? THE MARVEL UNIVERSE JUST AIN'T BIG ENOUGH FOR TWO NOVAS.
I'M NOT HOLDING IT AGAINST YOU ANY--AFTER ALL, YOU DID HAVE THE NAME FIRST. BUT I JUST WANTED YOU TO KNOW THAT YOU HAVE MORE THAN XANDERIAN TRADITION TO UPHOLD.
SO REMEMBER, BUDDY, I'LL BE WATCHING-- 'BYE!
..FOR NOW..
WOW...
..WHAT A HOT BOD!!..

The 1994 Marvel Holiday Bash

The Fabulous Flo Steinberg showed she's a proofreader who knows how to party!

Turkey leftovers were long gone and the new year was already a week old, but the partying wasn't over for Marvel's Bullpenners, freelancers, and friends.

As New York was blanketed by its second snowstorm of 1994, the stars ploughed their way to the Grand Hyatt Grand Ballroom on Manhattan's famed 42nd Street. Unwrapping themselves from their winter layers, everyone let loose for a night of festivities. . .Marvel style.

A special treat lay in store as guests were treated to the wedding of X-Men *Jean Grey* and *Scott Summers*, with Stan Lee officiating. There wasn't a dry eye in the house as Spider-Man took the blushing bride in his arms for a special dance, nor when the happy couple shared their first spin as man and wife. X-Editor Bob Harras was unable to attend, since he had *his own* wedding the next day, but John Romita, Jr., was on hand at the Hyatt to offer "the best of luck [from] Bob and Carol."

The Unlicensed Characters: (left to right) Nel Yomtov, Jim Krueger, Joe Kaufman, Scott Koblish, Wayne Murray, and Don Daley

The reception followed, and this bash had a *great* band. Marvel's own "The Unlicensed Characters," who had also played the Marvel Picnic and the end-of-the-season softball bash, took the Christmas party to new levels of rocking and rolling, courtesy of designer Joe Kaufman on guitar, ex-Romita's Raider Scott Koblish on guitar and vocals, current Raider Delayne Hawkins on bass, Bullpen letterer Wayne Murray on base, Punisher Editor Don Daley on drums, Midnight Sons Editor Even Skolnik on drums, Iron Man Editor Nel Yomtov on harmonica, X-Editor Suzanne Gaffney on vocals, Promotions writer Jim Krueger on saxophone, with guest appearances by assistant art director Steve Geiger, who lent his singing prowess for a couple of songs, Patti Graham on vocals, and Wayne's mom, Louise Murray, who played keyboards.

"It's a blast, the opportunity to do something *different*," said Joe Kaufman, whose job it was to keep the action going on stage. "It gives us an outlet we can share with the people we work with every day, and it gives us something that we all love to do."

Mother Nature couldn't keep fearless Marvel freelancers from this fabulous, star-studded affair. Some of those who tore themselves away from their drawing boards and computers included Klaus Janson, Charles Vess, John Kalisz, John Romita, Jr., Joe Quesada, Dick Ayers, Rick Parker, Larry Hama, Joe Rubinstein, and Chris Claremont, among the many.

Fabian Nicieza had some fun with pal (and NEW WARRIORS collaborator) Darick Robertson, with hopes that Darick "gets a lot more work, because if he does, he'll stop calling me and my hair will stop falling out!" Darick concurred with "getting a lot more work, and when I'm writing and drawing the X-MEN. . ." Watch out Fabe!

Marvel President Terry Stewart proved that super heroes aren't the only guys who know how to dress

The Barbie Squad: (left to right) Amanda Connor, Anna-Maria Cool, Hildy Mesnik and Lia Pelosi

The Chief, Tom DeFalco, chatted it up with Marvel VP Matt Ragone and sampled some of the great food

Having travelled all the way from Kansas, **BARBIE** penciler Anna-Maria Cool said, "It's the kind of party Barbie would just love!" **BARBIE** Editor Hildy Mesnik took time out to relax before launching her new Disney titles, and hoped for success in the upcoming year. Penciler/inker Win Mortimer hoped to continue to draw **BARBIE** and "anything else that comes along."

For editors, it was a time to reflect on the old year and relax before the new one really got rolling. Spider-Man Editor Danny Fingeroth's hopes are to "shock and astound our readers and give them a truly 'Spider-ific' year!" Midnight Sons Editor Bobbie Chase wished "that the people who are working on the projects have as much fun and have as much happiness on the projects as they've had in the past!" And the new year is going to be busy for Editor Mort Todd who is launching the entirely new Marvel Music line for Marvel. "I don't have to hope," Todd said. "I know everything is going to be *excellent*."

"Being here beats working, I'll tell you that," inker Hector Collazo commented. His partner in crime, Associate Editor Tim Tuohy, agreed: "Even though I missed last year's party, I'll say I don't think it could come *close* to this year's!" Assistant Spider-Editor Mark Bernardo resolved to "stay until they kick me out." And when the festivities came to it's scheduled closing time, President Terry Stewart agreed there was much more partying to be done, and extended it *another* two hours.

Foreshadowing: Archie Comics Editor Victor Gorelick and Marvel Executive Editor Mark Gruenwald

Eventually those who were still standing decided it was *finally* time to go home, agreeing with Executive Editor Mark Gruenwald that the 1994 party was "better than ever." Our friendly neighborhood Spider-Man summed it all up by saying, "Sometimes it feels like the good guys are outnumbered, but I look around this room and my heart is singing! Make Mine Marvel!"

– Lia M. Pelosi

CUSTOMIZING COMICS

- Spider-Man helping abused children.
- Captain America and the New Warriors busting a gang of aliens trying to hook kids on drugs.
- The X-Men hunting a computer virus that has infected their mutant-detecting Cerebro.

No, you haven't missed an issue of your favorite title — these adventures have taken place outside of the normal Marvel continuity. Outside continuity? How could this be? That's simple — all of these adventures were a part of Marvel's *Custom Publishing* program. This program, in effect since the early '70s, has produced many special, limited-run editions not available from Marvel or in comic book stores, created for and distributed by a variety of organizations who recognize that Marvel can help them reach an important audience.

According to Ronni Berger of the Custom Publishing division, Marvel characters are very attractive to corporations and organizations because of their demographic appeal. "We know that we have a strong reach with boys aged 7-17, and we also know that kids pick up comics, even if they hate to read," she stated. "So if an organization has a message that they want to deliver to kids in that demographic, or to parents of kids in that demographic, then comics is a perfect medium." Custom publishing doesn't just mean comics, she added; the Custom Publishing division is also responsible for producing trading cards and posters (*Crunch and Munch* and *Hanes* both included special Marvel trading cards in their packaging last year).

Berger stated that, over the years, organizations have approached Marvel about utilizing characters for various reasons: "It could be a cause, or just a premium giveaway." Sometimes their needs could be met by having that company or organization place an ad in the comics, but sometimes their needs are best met by creating a product to match their specific needs, or by referring them to a group that already created a custom comic. "If they're looking for something on child abuse prevention, I refer them to the National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse (NCPCA). If they want something on

literacy, I send them to the Baltimore City Literacy Corporation, because they have comics on those subjects already."

As a rule, custom comics are designed as giveaways; either free (like DAREDEVIL VS. VAPORA — about the dangers of gasoline vapors, and the two Spider-Man comics produced for the National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering), or free with a purchase (as with the GHOST RIDER COLLECTOR'S EDITION for Kay Bee stores, and THE AVENGERS COLLECTOR'S EDITION for *Charleston Chew*). Sometimes they are packed inside other Marvel-related products (such as Doctor Doom's Revenge and Madness in Murderworld — computer games from Paragon Software).

Occasionally custom comics are created for fund raising. In 1992 a special comic (that actually took place in continuity) was created for UNICEF and was available only via a mail-in coupon and a $5.00 donation to UNICEF. A second book of this nature is planned for release in '94 — starring Venom and the Hulk — for the National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse.

While the custom publishing program has existed for more than ten years, it has expanded dramatically in the last three years under the editorial direction of Glenn Herdling, who also edits THE UNTAMED for Epic, and NOMAD and BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD for Marvel. "I like to try to make the custom comics look and feel like the regular books," he stated. To this end, he snagged the uncanny talents of Scott Lobdell to write all six Pizza Hut comics given away in a pair of '93 promotions. "Many of our artists and writers would love to get involved in our custom publishing program, but their schedules make it difficult," Herdling lamented. Still, Peter David has written *both* of the Venom editions, and in 1990 Todd McFarlane drew the cover for *Skating on Thin Ice*, a custom comic starring Spider-Man in a story about drug abuse among high school students, produced for the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police and distributed by them in Canada.

"Terry Austin is a big fan of custom comics, but he's always too busy to work on one," Herdling stated, noting that he often utilizes new talent to work on the custom comics. "It's a great place to try people out," he said, commenting that he recently came across a submission that showed promise, and hired the artist to work on a book.

Herdling is very careful to maintain the integrity of the characters, and while the books technically don't usually take place in the Marvel Universe, he wants them written as if they *could have been*. "If we were to produce a comic now with Wolverine in it, I'd want it to have him without the adamantium in his bones," he said. Herdling is also careful about the characters' motivations. "It's okay for the X-Men to appear in a comic sponsored by Pizza Hut, but if they were to say they *eat* at Pizza Hut, it would be considered an endorsement, and move the comic into a different area." In the recent THE X-MEN COLLECTOR'S EDITION from Pizza Hut, Scott Lobdell originally wrote a closing line from Jubilee saying they should all go eat at Pizza Hut, which Herdling altered to read "Pizza, anyone?!"

"I like to try to make the custom comics look and feel like the regular books."

Herdling is often required to walk a very narrow fence. He related a story about a client that wanted an X-Men book, but rejected the proposal because it wasn't what they were expecting. "It was then I realized that they wanted an X-MEN ADVENTURES comic, not an UNCANNY X-MEN comic." Now when a client asks for the X-Men, Herdling is careful to show them both versions.

He also stated that people tend to always ask for Spider-Man or the X-Men, and he often has to steer them to more appropriate characters. "I like to try and use other characters whenever I can," Herdling said, as in producing a comic in cooperation with the Arise Foundation and the Metro-Dade Police Department of Florida. It starred Namorita and dealt with environmental issues and drug abuse.

Herdling said he was somewhat surprised that Kay Bee used Ghost Rider in a recent promotion involving the toy store and Sega Genesis and Nintendo video games. These days he is fond of utilizing The New Warriors because of their youth appeal. When asked what would be good match-ups of characters and products or causes, Herdling responded that he would like to see Quicksilver promoting running shoes, Iceman pitching ice cream, and She-Hulk using body-building equipment.

According to Herdling, a perfect match-up recently came with WOLVERINE: GLOBAL JEOPARDY, a custom comic that was actually sold in comic shops. It starred Wolverine, Namor, Ka-Zar, and Shanna, and proceeds were given to the World Wildlife Fund in the name of Carol Kalish, a former Marvel employee who died in 1991 and who actively supported the WWF organization.

CUSTOM COMICS THROUGH THE YEARS

Herdling noted that not only were these the perfect characters to champion endangered species, but the story was written by Peter David, Carol's friend and former assistant, and was drawn by Richard Howell, her long-time companion.

On occasion, Herdling is asked to develop new characters, but this presents problems of its own. "Creating new characters is a lot trickier because it involves licensing, and I want to make sure the creators involved get their fair share of any potential royalties." A pair of new characters (Nomextra™ and Kevlor™) were created for DuPont when Marvel produced a comic to be distributed to firehouses around the country. Nomex® and Kevlar® are DuPont-made products that are used in fire fighting. General Mills also had Marvel create a comic featuring the characters Apple and Cinnaman, promoting its *Apple and Cinnamon Cheerios* cereal.

Both Herdling and Berger are very pleased with the quality and diversity of the comics and material they produce, and are always on the lookout for new projects. "[Marvel President] Terry Stewart is very 'pro-kids,'" Berger stated. "We feel that kids spend their allowance money to buy our comics, and we want to do something to give something back to kids to enrich their lives."

– Robert J. Sodaro

Of nearly 100 custom comics Marvel has published, one of the earliest was an insert into *Esquire* and *Eye Magazines*, a 17-page mini-comic that partially reprinted AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #42 in a very unusual size (6¾" × 5"). As this made the book wider than it was tall, the original story was re-edited to run two and three panels across, with the subplots removed.

Other early custom comics during the '60s included a series of comics and record sets reprinting the origins of the Fantastic Four, Spidey, The Avengers, and Thor, with an audio track which the listener could follow in the comic (sans ads). Another line was packaged with plastic models, included Tonto, The Lone Ranger, Spider-Man, and The Hulk, and combined a four-page story with the assembly instructions.

An early (and perhaps the most unusual) pro-social mini-comic was SPIDER-MAN VS. THE PRODIGY. Sponsored by Planned Parenthood, it was directed at dispelling misunderstandings teenagers have about sex. The web-slinger battled The Prodigy, an alien utilizing hypnotic vocal powers to convince teenagers not to worry about indiscriminate sexual relations, so they would bear children he could abduct as slaves.

During the early '80s Marvel's custom comics really hit stride, with dozens coming out in various venues. Many were premium giveaways for products (*Aim* toothpaste, *All* detergent, *Seven-Eleven* stores), and one group appeared as inserts in regional newspapers — including *The Columbus Dispatch*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Dallas Times-Herald*, *The Denver Post*, and *The Kansas City Star* — often co-sponsored by area department stores. Other unusual custom comics starred non-Marvel characters like the Nesties' *Quick Bunny*, *Kool-Aid Man*, and Cheerios' *Apple* and *Cinnaman*.

Perhaps the best-known Marvel custom series is the trio of Spider-Man books developed in conjunction with the National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse. Dealing with sexual, physical, and emotional abuse, these have been widely distributed via schools, newspapers, and wherever young people might find them. Perhaps the most often-reprinted comics ever published, the first issue — in print since it first appeared in 1984 — has a print run of more than 15 million copies, and the three have a combined circulation of more than 24 million. A fourth book, starring the Hulk and Venom, has just been released — not as an educational tool, but as a benefit book.

Most older issues are out-of-print and completely unavailable, and Marvel does not distribute those that *are* in print — they tend to be available through the sponsor organizations, and thus are among the more challenging oddities of the comic book world.

— Robert J. Sodaro

BUT I DIGEST...

Letters

Send your letters to: MARVEL AGE MAGAZINE, c/o Marvel Comics Group, 387 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016.

Attention, correspondents: All letters to be considered for publication must include your complete name and address, though we will gladly withhold that info on request!

This month's letter column title comes to us from Brent "Cap" Fishbaugh of Paulding, OH. Thanks, Cap (as Bucky would want to say)! Of course, after reading this issue's article on the Clive Barker titles, we're a little nervous about *what's* being digested. . .but we digress.

More to the point, we want to remind everyone that we need a newer and niftier title for this column every single month. So jot 'em down and send 'em in! If we use one of yours, we'll print your name in this very space. And in space, no one can hear you scream.

Dear Marvel,

X-MEN and UNCANNY X-MEN are probably the best comics ever made. I subscribed to them and I have a few questions about subscribing:

1) You said you might start printing comics with and without enhanced covers. Good idea, but which version would subscribers get?

2) I noticed that when a comic comes in the mail, nowhere does it say, "Do not bend or fold." This is important. Without it, the mailman can fold it anyway he wants. Please start putting this on the address paper that comes with the comic book. Thanks.

So anyway, until Spider-Man develops arachnophobia, make mine Marvel!

J. Tanski
2865 Route 98
Varysburg, NY 14167

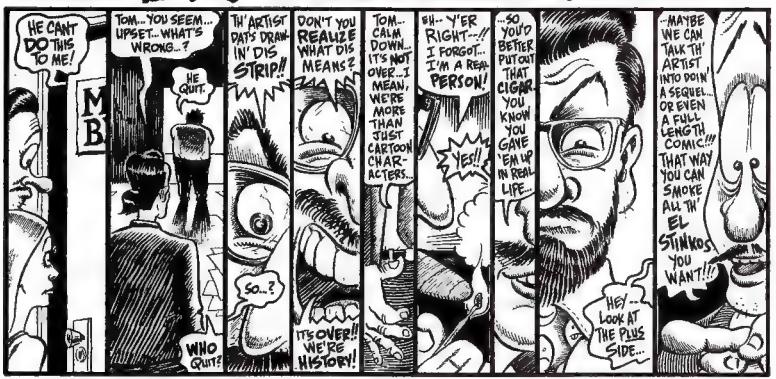
As we've noted in previous columns, all comic books with enhanced covers are now being accompanied by regular, unenhanced editions (at their standard cover price). But don't worry, J., the friendly folks in our Subscriptions Department assure us that subscribers will receive the enhanced editions, just like always, at no additional cost. We also passed along your idea about the mailing label. We can't promise anything, but we'll see what happens.

Dear MARVEL AGE,

I have something to tell you that you may find interesting: I'm related to someone who may be your oldest fan. My great grandmother Victoria is 98 years old (still healthy as a horse!) and she still enjoys your comics. In fact, it may well be your comics that are the cause for her longevity! Her favorite title — THE UNCANNY X-MEN, of course!

I love Marvels, too, and I hope to keep reading them until I'm that age! Keep up the good work, and if I live that long, I'll still say, "Make

THE LAST BOSSMEN by RICK PARKER


HE CAN'T DO THIS TO ME!
TOM... YOU SEEM... UPSET... WHAT'S WRONG...?
HE QUIT.
WHO QUIT?
TH' ARTIST PATS DRAWIN' DIS STRIP!!
SO...?
DON'T YOU REALIZE WHAT DIS MEANS?
ITS OVER!! WE'RE HISTORY!
TOM... CALM DOWN... IT'S NOT OVER... I MEAN, WE'RE MORE THAN JUST CARTOON CHARACTERS...
EH-- Y'ER RIGHT--!! I FORGOT... I'M A REAL PERSON!
YES!!
...SO, YOU'D BETTER PUT OUT THAT CIGAR YOU KNOW YOU GAVE 'EM UP IN REAL LIFE...
HEY... LOOK AT THE PLUS SIDE...
...MAYBE WE CAN TALK 'TH' ARTIST INTO DOIN' A SEQUEL... OR EVEN A FULL-LENGTH COMIC!!! THAT WAY YOU CAN SMOKE ALL TH' EL STINKOS YOU WANT!!!

Stan Lee and the web-slinger were on hand December 6, 1993, at *Golden Apple Comics* in Los Angeles, to celebrate the beginning of **SPIDER-MAN: THE MUTANT AGENDA**, the first crossover between the Marvel comic books and the King Features comic strip (carried by the *Los Angeles Times*). Photo by Al Ortega, courtesy of Bill Liebowitz

Mine Marvel!"

Brian Corvello
(Address withheld by request)

And we'll be there to hear you, Brian. . .although you'll probably have to speak up a bit. We're thrilled to hear about your great grandmother, and we hope she stays a part of the Mighty Marvel family for many years to come. Please give her our best.

And speaking of "our best," it's time once again for our LETTER OF THE MONTH, a letter that we think will be of particular interest to Marvelites far and wide. In fact, this month's Letter of the Month concerns Marvelites directly — namely how to add new ones to the fold. . .

MARVEL AGE,

I read Stan Lee's column in MARVEL AGE #131, and I couldn't be happier. It's about time Marvel started to focus on female and younger male readers.

Speaking of expanding Marvel's readership, I have a few ideas myself:

1) Educate the mainstream bookstore owners. Currently, if they carry graphic novels or paperbacks at all, they stick them all on one big rack. Instead, MOONSHADOW and ALIEN LEGION should go in the science fiction section, PUNISHER in adventure, and so on. This would help legitimize trade paperbacks and graphic novels.

2) Keep the price down. If readers are thinking about giving comics a shot, price might be the factor that drives them away. That's why foil covers, holograms, etc., are (to my way of thinking) counterproductive. You're not attracting new readers with these gimmicks. The collectors' market (who'd buy the comics even if you dropped the gimmicks) is only a drop in the bucket compared to the numbers you *could* be pulling in.

3) BARBIE is great for attracting younger females. How about a steamy soap opera comic *a la* DALLAS for older females (and males, for that matter — I love *The Young and the Restless)*? Of course, the creative team would have to be some fan favorites who'd attract typical comics readers too, and you'd have to promote it in the right places. Risky? You bet. But comics like BREAK THE CHAIN prove to me that you are indeed willing to take risks.

4) Use graphic novels solely for new ideas and characters. We see enough of The Punisher, Wolverine, or Spider-Man already (more than enough, in fact). Why water them down even further? Graphic novels, if promoted correctly, *can* sell in bookstores. So try to avoid at all costs the use of super heroes in graphic novels, especially the already-established heroes. Experiment in length, genre, and subject matter. It's the only way the "lowly" graphic novel will get any respect on this continent. (Credit where credit is due: Thanks for THE AGENT, SINKING, SOMEPLACE STRANGE, HEARTBURST, A SOLDIER'S STORY, GREENBERG THE VAMPIRE, and the wonderful MOEBIUS reprints.)

5) If something is good, it should be reprinted in trade paperback format. This is *especially* true in the case of non-super hero material. Why? Because the comics industry is so dominated by super heroes that an outside observer might think there's nothing else! A stronger non-super heroic presence in trade paperbacks would help to combat this impression. And again, such non-super heroic material can also find a niche in bookstores. So I'd better see MORT THE DEAD TEENAGER or SACHS AND VIOLENS trade paperbacks. *Capice?*

Anyway, I guess I'll sign off for now. Keep pushing ever forward.

Troy Wilson
5659 Tomswood Rd.
Site 243, C-31
Port Alberta, BC
V9Y 7L6
Canada

Lots of interesting ideas there, Troy. Sorry we had to edit your letter down a little bit (remember, everyone: *please* limit your letters to two pages), but we wanted to make sure that we could fit it in here for everyone to see.

Actually, we're pursuing many of your ideas in one manner or another. The whole point behind our trade paperback reprints is to make hard-to-find stories more accessible, to fans and non-fans alike. And yes, we are including non-super hero material, as the recent REN AND STIMPY SHOW trade paperbacks attest. All our trade paperbacks are offered to the book stores

On the night before the 1993 Thanksgiving Day Parade, Spider-Man was one of the first Macy's balloons inflated on New York's 81st Street north of the American Museum of Natural History. Photographs by Dana Hayward.

through a company that specializes in helping establish special-interest racks in shops.

In fact, our efforts have gone beyond trade paperbacks as well; for instance, you may recall that, a couple of years ago, we reprinted THE 'NAM in a black-and-white *magazine* format to make the series more appealing to adult readers of military magazines.

The best way to ensure the future of comics is to find ways to broaden the audience. That's why we keep experimenting with new formats, such as the rock 'n' roll comics discussed elsewhere in this issue, or our upcoming Disney titles (see next issue for details). Of course, we love super heroes too, and we wouldn't want to neglect them. But we'll keep plugging away until we've got something for everybody (Keep your eyes out for our *deluxe* edition of SACHS & VIOLENS).

Naturally, all of you can do your bit, too. Write to us and let us know what you'd like to see collected. And don't forget: The best way to broaden the audience for comic books is to share one with a friend.

Dear MARVEL AGE,

Will you please make a comic book like WOLVERINE, but with the Beast, Psylocke, Jean Gray, Jubilee, Rogue, or Cyclops as the main characters? If you do, can I have the first one?

Logan Riley
1323 Barber Dr.
Carbondale, CO 81623

Well, Logan, we're afraid those particular characters aren't scheduled for solo series in the immediate future, although it could happen if enough people demand it. In the meantime, Editor Kelly Corvese tells us that some of the heroes on your list will be featured in upcoming issues of X-MEN UNLIMITED. Keep an eye out for Rogue (alongside Nightcrawler and Mystique) in issue #4 and Jubilee (along with Professor X, Lilandra, Storm, and Forge) in #5. Current plans also call for a Beast story down the road. See? All things do come to those who wait.

Nevertheless, for those who can't stand to wait, let's proceed, without any further hesitation, to pick up on some news and views from one of our favorite Wild Agents of Marvel in our monthly. . .

Remember: To take part in the WAM Jam, all you have to do is write to us on official WAM stationery or include your WAM I.D. number in your letter. We'll be waiting to rendezvous with you under the next full moon.

Dear Steve,

I read in MARVEL AGE a while back that No-Prizes are no longer given for pointing out errors in Marvel Comics, but that it is still possible to earn the coveted award for an act of benevolence involving the use of Marvel comic books. While it was not my primary motivation in doing so, earlier this year I donated 112 Marvel comics to nearby Rex Hospital. Enclosed you will find a copy of the letter that accompanied the donation and the letter of acknowledgement that I received from Rex Hospital, albeit a couple of months later. If this should happen to fit the profile of altruism you are looking for, nothing would give me greater pleasure than to find a No-Prize in my mailbox in the near future.

Until the Silver Surfer turns gray, make mine Marvel!

Dewey Cassell
309 Trappers Sack Rd.
Cary, NC 27513

Nicely done, Dewey! A shiny, new No-Prize is on the way. We hope others will learn from your gleaming example. And when's the last time you heard that said about agents of the CIA or KGB?

checklist

PREMIERES

BLACKWULF #1 1.50
Wild new heroes and wild action

CONAN CLASSIC #1 1.50
Re-presenting classic Roy Thomas/Barry Windsor-Smith tales CONAN

THE ADVENTURER #1 1.50
All-new Conan tales, and a foil-embossed cover

CONEHEADS #1 (of 4) 1.75
Consume mass quantities.

PRISON COLONY #1 (of 3) 1.50
Based on the new major motion picture

ROCKO'S MODERN LIFE #1 1.95
Tales of the hit Nickelodeon superstar wallaby

APRIL SPOTLIGHT

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN ASHCAN .75
A 16-page primer on Spidey lore

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #390 2.95
SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #213 2.95
SPIDER-MAN #46 2.95
SPIDER-MAN CLASSIC #15 2.95
MARVEL TALES #286 2.95
WEB OF SPIDER-MAN #113 2.95
Each with a metallic ink cover, polybagged with an additional 16-page insert and simulated cartoon animation cel

"We're very excited about this—for the first time in the history of comics, fans get the opportunity to own a sample of cel art. Only at Marvel!" —Associate Editor Mark Powers

AVENGERS #375 2.50
Bound-in poster, 48-pager

"All I'm going to say is, Avengers fans dare not miss this one!" —Assistant Editor Pat Garrahy

GHOST RIDER #50 2.95
With 48 pages and die-cut, foil-stamped cover

"GR is back with more leather-clad action than you can shake a chain at!" —Assistant Editor James Felder

INCREDIBLE HULK #418 2.50
Die-cut, gatefold cover

INCREDIBLE HULK ASHCAN .75
A 16-page retrospective on Rick and Mario's relationship with The Hulk and Betty

"A cavalcade of villains gatecrash Rick's bachelor party. It'll be a great wedding, if he survives!" —Assistant Editor James Felder

SILVER SABLE #25 1.95
In this 48-pager Sable searches for her father.

"Not only does Sable learn the truth about her father, but we also present a special tale of Lil' Silvie." —Editor Craig Anderson

THOR #475 2.50
Multi-level embossing and foil-stamping

"It's 48 pages of hard-hitting hammer action!" —Assistant Editor Joe Andreani

X-CUTIONER'S SONG 24.95
Collecting the classic crossover in a 280-page edition with a foil-stamped cover.

"Apocalypse, Stryfe, Mr. Sinister... what more could you ask for?" —Assistant Editor Jaye Gardner

First Week

THE ADVENTURES OF CYCLOPS AND PHOENIX #2 (of 4) 2.95
Scott and Jean face Apocalypse.

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN ASHCAN .75

CABLE #12 2.00

CAPTAIN AMERICA #428 1.50

CONAN SAGA #87 2.25
With special Conan Comics Chronology

DAREDEVIL #329 1.50

DARKHAWK #40 1.50
"Amulet Quest" part 3 (of 4)

DOCTOR WHO #212 4.95

DOCTOR WHO CLASSIC COMICS #18 4.95
The fate of Earth

FORCE WORKS #1 2.95
At last—Force Works!

GROO THE WANDERER #113 2.25
A genie offers Groo three wishes.

INCREDIBLE HULK ASHCAN .75

NAMOR #51 1.50
The race against Attuma

REN & STIMPY #19 1.95
The boys turn invisible.

SPIDER-MAN #46 1.95
Without the special insert...

...and with the special insert. 2.95

SPIDER-MAN 2099 #20 1.50

SPIDER-MAN CLASSIC #15 1.25
Without the special insert...

SPIDER-MAN CLASSIC #15 2.95
...and with the special insert.

UNCANNY X-MEN #313 1.50
Gambit, Yukio and Storm learn the secret of Phalanx.

WEB OF SPIDER-MAN #113 1.50
Without the special insert...

WEB OF SPIDER-MAN #113 2.95
...and with the special insert.

WEB OF SPIDER-MAN ANNUAL 2.95

X-CUTIONER'S SONG 24.95

Second Week

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #390 1.50

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #390 2.95

BARBIE #42 1.25

BLACKWULF #1 1.50

CONAN CLASSIC #1 1.50

GHOST RIDER #50 2.95

GHOST RIDER #50 2.50

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY #49 1.50
Introducing an all-new Celestial

MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS #156 1.75
Tales of Vengeance, Hawkeye, New Warriors and Nick Fury

NIGHT THRASHER #11 1.95

NOVA #6 1.95

PRISON COLONY #1 (of 3) 1.50

PUNISHER WAR ZONE #28 1.95
Will Micro and Ice save The Punisher in time?

QUASAR #59 1.25
The aftermath of Starblast

RAVAGE 2099 #19 1.50

SACHS & VIOLENS #3 (of 4) 2.25
The duo take down the heads of the porno ring.

SECRET DEFENDERS #16 1.95
Nick Fury gathers Thor, Namor and Captain America.

THE SHROUD #4 (of 4) 1.75

SILVER SABLE #25 1.50

UNCANNY X-MEN ANNUAL #18 2.95

WAR MACHINE #3 1.50

WOLVERINE #82 1.95
Logan returns to Madripoor.

X-FACTOR #103 1.50
Lorna and Alex battle Mr. Sinister.

X-MEN ADVENTURES SEASON II #5 1.25
Alpha Flight kidnaps Wolverine.

X-MEN: THE EARLY YEARS #2 1.50
The debut of the Vanisher

MATCHES OF THE MONTH

CABLE #12 2.00
Cable vs. Omega Red

CAPTAIN AMERICA #428 1.50
Cap vs. Americorp

IRON MAN #305 1.50
Iron Man vs. Hulk

NIGHTWATCH #3 1.50
Nightwatch vs. Mechamorph

RAVAGE 2099 #19 1.50
Ravage vs. X-11

SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #213 1.50
Spider-Man vs. Typhoid Mary

SPIDER-MAN #46 1.95
Spidey vs. Hobgoblin

SPIDER-MAN #47 1.95
Spidey vs. Demogoblin

SPIDER-MAN 2099 #20 1.50
Spidey vs. Discord

WAR MACHINE #3 1.50
War Machine vs. Nick Fury and S.H.I.E.L.D.

X-MEN 2099 #9 1.50
Xi'an vs. Zhao

Third Week

AVENGERS #375 2.00
Regular edition

AVENGERS #375 2.50
Special edition

BEAVIS & BUTT-HEAD #4 1.95
How to spy on the neighbors

BRATS BIZARRE #2 (of 4) 2.50
The truth behind Bebe's death

CONAN THE ADVENTURER #1 1.50

CONEHEADS #1 (of 4) 1.75

COSMIC POWERS #4 (of 6) 2.50

DOCTOR WHO 1.50

CLASSIC COMICS #19 4.95
With a free bound-in poster

DOOM 2099 #18 1.50
To the Savage Land 2099

EXCALIBUR #78 1.95

FANTASTIC FOUR ANNUAL #27 2.95

FANTASTIC FOUR UNLIMITED #6 3.95
The FF battle the Sub-Mariner.

GHOST RIDER 2099 #2 1.50
GR hunts for his killers.

G.I. JOE #149 1.25

INCREDIBLE HULK #418 1.50
Regular edition

INCREDIBLE HULK #418 2.50
Special edition

MARVEL AGE #137 1.25

MARVEL TALES #286 1.25

MARVEL TALES #286 2.95

MORBIUS #22 1.95

PUNISHER #91 1.50
The Punisher faces a ruthless mercenary.

ROCKO'S MODERN LIFE #1 1.95

SABRETOOTH CLASSICS #2 1.50
Power Man and Iron Fist

SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #222 2.25
"The Haunter of the Towers"—Roy Thomas and John Buscema re-tell the first tale of Conan the Barbarian.

THUNDERSTRIKE #9 1.50
The resurrection of Bloodaxe

TRANSFORMERS: GENERATION 2 #8 1.75
An unholy alliance.

WARLOCK AND THE INFINITY WATCH #29 1.95
A trap for Warlock.

WHAT IF #62 1.50
"What if Wolverine battled Weapon X?"

X-MEN #33 1.50
Revealing secrets of Gambit's youth

X-MEN 2099 #9 1.50

Fourth Week

BARBIE FASHION #42 1.25

DR. STRANGE #66 1.95
The Midnight Sons confront Dr. Strange.

DR. STRANGE ANNUAL #4 2.95

FANTASTIC FOUR #389 1.50
Introducing an all-new Laser Fist

GHOST RIDER & BLAZE: SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE #23 1.95
Blaze learns that Centurius is alive.

HELLSTORM #19 2.00
A haunted mansion

IRON MAN #305 1.50

MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS #157 1.75
Vengeance, Hawkeye, New Warriors and The Destroyer.

MARVEL SPOTLIGHT #17 Free
Marvel's May titles

NEW WARRIORS #45 1.50

NIGHTWATCH #3 1.50

NORTHSTAR #3 (of 4) 1.75
Northstar tracks down Arcade.

OFFICIAL INDEX TO THE X-MEN #3 (of 5) 1.95
Indexing UNCANNY X-MEN #123-180

PUNISHER 2099 #17 1.50

PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL #67 1.95
The Punisher takes on the whole Marvel Universe.

SILVER SURFER #93 1.50
"Return to Earth" part 1 (of 4)

SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #213 1.50
Regular

SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #213 2.95
Deluxe

SPIDER-MAN #47 1.95

SPIDER-MAN/X-FACTOR #2 1.95
Spidey & X-Factor take on Shadowforce.

THOR #475 2.50

VENOM: THE MACE #2 (of 4) 2.95
Venom's underground allies abandon him.

WILLIAM SHATNER'S TEK WORLD #22 1.75
"Sims Of The Father" part 3

X-FORCE #35 1.50
Cable and the team attack Nimrod industries.

X-MEN CLASSIC #96 1.25
The X-Men battle the Magus.

X-MEN UNLIMITED #5 3.95
Lilandra formally annexes the Kree empire.

CROSSOVERS

TIME AND TIME AGAIN

NIGHT THRASHER #11 1.95
Part 2 (of 8): Thrash becomes a slave on a southern plantation.

NOVA #6 1.95
Part 3 (of 8): Nova travels to an alternate future Earth.

NEW WARRIORS #48 1.50
Part 4 (of 8): The other Warriors are scattered through time and space.

GUEST APPEARANCES

EXCALIBUR #78 1.95
Wolverine

MORBIUS #22 1.95
Spider-Man

THE SHROUD #4 (of 4) 1.95
Spider-Man

1.75

ANNUALS

With 64-pages and special tales told from the villain's perspective

DR. STRANGE ANNUAL #4 2.95
The conclusion of "Stranger Among Us"

FANTASTIC FOUR ANNUAL #27 2.95
The T.V.A. wants Reed in prison.

WEB OF SPIDER-MAN ANNUAL #10 2.95
The return of Shriek

UNCANNY X-MEN ANNUAL #16 2.95
Caliban seeks revenge on the X-Men.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					HAPPY BIRTHDAY BILL OAKLEY 1 **GOOD FRIDAY**	JACKIE BESS 2
3 **EASTER**	4	GIL KANE ARTHUR ADAMS 5	SCOTT DONIGIAN 6	MIKE MARTIN 7	8	KELLY CORVESE CHRIS COOPER 9
CINDY EMMERT TIM TOUHY DAVID WOHL 10	MARK FRASER JULIA MOLINO JANE GONZALEZ MARK McKENNA JEFF ZONENSHINE 11	WENDI DANIELS 12	CELIA SANTANA 13	CHUCK DIXON 14	TOM SUTTON 15	16
EARL NOREM SCOTT MARSHALL 17	PAMELA DoVALE JON LANG 18	JEFF KAPLAN 19	VALARIA WATSON GEORGIANA WHITE 20	TOM DANING MIKE THOMAS 21	MARIE JAVINS MAUREEN KEMPF 22	SERGIO CARIELLO 23
24	PETER SANDERSON TRACEY DeSANDIS 25	STEVE DUTRO MARIE-THERESA HERNON STEVE ALEXANDROV 26	SUSAN CRESPI DAN WERTHER 27	DICK AYERS 28	29	ANTON LUPESKI 30

MARVEL
Age
136
And now —
Blackwulf™
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
MAY 1994
$1.25 US $1.70 CAN
DIRECT EDITION
136 11
7 59606 02043 0